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# Brandy Nan and Farmer George: Public Perceptions of Royal Health and the Demystification of English Monarchy During the Long Eighteenth Century

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

BRANDY NAN AND FARMER GEORGE:  
PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ROYAL HEALTH  
AND THE DEMYSTIFICATION OF ENGLISH MONARCHY  
DURING THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HISTORY

BY

STEVEN J. CATANIA

CHICAGO, IL

DECEMBER 2014

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates how public comments related to the body natural and the body politic of the English monarchs, particularly in newspapers and other forms of print culture, changed between 1688 and 1789. It argues that by examining the depth and type of reportage on royal health and the sovereign's body, coupled with Parliament's increasing involvement in such activities, it is possible to see the irregular trajectory of how the English monarchy was demystified during the long eighteenth century. Additionally, this work shows how the topic of monarchical health went from being an illicit subject, to one associated with a popular claim that English citizens had a right to know the full details of their monarch's private life. Furthermore, the dissertation provides a prosopographical examination of those individuals near the English kings and queens, who helped supply the confidential information about the sovereign's health, which precipitated the process of demystification. The importance of this work is that it provides a more nuanced discussion of the process of demystification, over a wider period of time, than earlier scholarship. Moreover, it shows that there is an under-studied connection among the history of medicine, the court, and the rise of the public sphere.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: BODILY HEALTH AND

#### THE DEMYSTIFICATION OF THE ENGLISH MONARCH

The *Civil Parent* is he, whom God hath establisht the *Supream Magistrate*, who by a just right possesses the Throne in a Nation. This is the common Father of all those that are under his authority. The duty we owe to this *Parent*, is, *first Honour*, and *Reverence*, looking on him, as upon one, on whom God hath stamped much of his own power and authority, and therefore paying him all honour and esteem, never daring, upon any pretence whatsoever, to *speak evil of the Ruler of our People....*<sup>1</sup> –*Whole Duty of Man* (1661)

Therefore, seeing that sovereigns are God's vicegerents, and do reign by his authority, they have also a right to be *honoured* and revered by their subjects; because they bear God's character, and do shine with the rays of his majesty: and consequently, it is an affront to God's own majesty, for subjects to condemn and vilify their sovereigns, to expose their faults, and uncover their nakedness, and lampoon and libel their persons and actions: therefore never speak evil of the ruler of thy people.<sup>2</sup> –*The New Whole Duty of Man, Containing the Faith as Well as Practice of a Christian* (1753)

Whether I have too little sense to see, or too much to be imposed upon; whether I have too much or too little pride, or of anything else, I leave out of the question; but certain it is, that what is called monarchy, always appears to me a silly, contemptible thing. I compare it to something kept behind a curtain, about which there is a great deal of bustle and fuss, and a wonderful air of seeming solemnity; but when, by any accident, the curtain happens to be open, and the company see what it is, they burst into laughter.<sup>3</sup> –*The Rights of Man* (1791)

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Allestree, *Whole Duty of Man*, Last ed. corrected and amended (London: Timothy Garthwait, 1661), 278.

<sup>2</sup> *The New Whole Duty of Man.... Authorised by the King's Most Excellent Majesty*, 11th ed. (London, 1753), 187-9.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, Part 1 (New York: Peter Eckler, 1892), 174-5.

The above quotations suggest a monumental change in England during the long eighteenth century in how people viewed both the monarchy and the physical body of the sovereign. For many centuries a concept existed in England that explained the ordering of the world and why everyone was born into their social position. This Great Chain of Being provided the hierarchical structure for the universe, as people knew that God was at the top of the chain and the higher up someone was positioned, the closer they were to God. The division of men included kings, nobles, gentlemen, yeoman, husbandmen, cottagers, and at the bottom, laborers. The king held his esteemed position because God had chosen him, which led to the belief in sacred kingship. As the top link of terrestrial dwellers in the chain, the sovereign was God's representative on earth and the absolute magistrate of God's will. As a result of this placement, subjects owed their monarch tribute, obedience, honor, and reverence.<sup>4</sup>

The difficulty with all this was that, as Paine would later point out, monarchs were self-evidently human. By the time of King Henry VIII, the political theorist John Aylmer observed that, in regard to kings, "we should rather fixe our eyes upon their office, which is gods: then upon their person whiche is mans."<sup>5</sup> Building on this distinction between the king's divine office and his human, and therefore infirm body, jurists during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I explained this connection through the idea of

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England 1785-1714. A Narrative History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 22-30 and Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936).

<sup>5</sup> Stephen L. Collins, *From Divine Cosmos to Sovereign State: An Intellectual History of the Idea of Order in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 17.

the king's two bodies: the body natural and the body politic. In elaboration the jurists wrote:

For the King has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmitities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body.<sup>6</sup>

Such a belief was refined and expanded during the reign of Elizabeth's successor, King James I. As a result of the views espoused by individuals like the Presbyterian George Buchanan and the Catholic Robert Bellarmine that a bad ruler could be overthrown by the

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<sup>6</sup> Edmund Plowden, *The Commentaries or Reports of Edmund Plowden* (London, 1816), 212a. Also see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Bernhard Jussen, "'The King's Two Bodies' Today," *Representations* 106 (Spring 2009): 102-117; Jeroen Deploige and Gita Deneckere, eds., *Mystifying the Monarch: Studies on Discourse, Power, and History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007); Ahmed Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam (1400-1700)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Michelle A. Laughran, "A Living Relic: Venice's Doge and His Paradoxical Two Bodies," (Paper presented at The Royal Body Conference, University of London, April 2012); Allison Williams Lewin, "'Age Does Not Matter: Venetian Doges in Reality and Depiction,'" in *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John M. Najemy*, ed. David S. Peterson and Daniel E. Bornstein (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008), 305-319; Richard Tomlinson, *Divine Right: The Inglorious Survival of British Royalty* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1994); Ian Gilmour, *The Body Politic* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1971); Sergio Bertelli, *The King's Body: Sacred Rituals of Power in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield (University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); Eric L. Santner, *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011); Bernhard Jussen, ed., *Die Macht Des Königs: Herrschaft in Europa vom Frühmittelalter bis in die Neuzeit* (Munich: C.H. Beck oHG, 2005); Glenn Burgess, "The Divine Right of Kings Reconsidered," *The English Historical Review* 107, no. 425 (1992): 837-61; John Neville Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922); Hannah Smith, "'Last of all the Heavenly Birth': Queen Anne and Sacral Queenship," *Parliamentary History* 28, no. 1 (2009): 137-49.



people or deposed by the will of the Pope, the first Stuart trumpeted a belief in divine right monarchy, claiming in 1609 that:

The State of MONARCHIE is the supremest thing upon earth: For Kings are not onely GODS Lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon GODS throne, but even by God himselfe they are called Gods.... Kings are justly called Gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of Divine power upon earth: For if you wil [*sic*] consider the Attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a King.<sup>7</sup>

As convinced as James I was in his divine right, there were threats to these beliefs developing in Early Modern England.

The greatest challenge to these ideas about monarchy emerged during the Civil Wars, which culminated in the execution of King Charles I in 1649. In that moment, the Great Chain of Being, the theory of the king's two bodies, and the idea of sacred, divine, and mysterious kingship cracked. The reaction of the crowd outside Inigo Jones' Banqueting House on January 30, which included a loud moan and people dipping their handkerchiefs in Charles' blood, reflected that many people still believed certain aspects of kingship elevated the monarch to a supra-human level.<sup>8</sup>

Before burial, Charles I's head and body were reattached. After the Commonwealth and Protectorate, a larger and more difficult metaphorical reattachment took place with the restoration of Charles II to the throne of England. Charles embraced a number of rituals and ceremonies which helped reestablish the magnificence of monarchy, while his "publicists ... devote[d] considerable attention to the king's own

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<sup>7</sup> Charles Howard McIlwain, ed., *The Political Works of James I. Reprinted from the Edition of 1616* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), 307. I have updated the spelling of this passage so that, when needed, the letters v, u, and j are all used as they are in modern English, replacing the occasional use of u, v, and i respectively, as appears in the source material. E.g. 'iustly' (original) versus 'justly' (in this paper).

<sup>8</sup> Bucholz and Key, 250.

nature – his manly character, good manners, and fine physique.”<sup>9</sup> However, the king’s licentiousness and the lack of a legitimate heir turned the actions of the restored monarch’s natural body into a site of public discussion. His sexual exploits were well-known at the time, as indicated in the following poem.

Hard by Pall Mall lives a wench call’d Nell.  
King Charles the Second he kept her.  
She hath got a trick to handle his p---,  
But never lays hands on his sceptre [*sic*].  
All matters of state from her soul she does hate,  
And leave to the politic bitches.  
The whore’s in the right, for ‘tis her delight  
To be scratching just where it itches.<sup>10</sup>

Although these words might have been new, such discussions were hardly unique, as during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, the sexual identity of the monarchs caused tongues to wag while under Henry VIII, the king’s strength, virility, and masculinity were displayed to show the stability he brought to the nation.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, one of

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<sup>9</sup> Anna Keay, *The Magnificent Monarch: Charles II and the Ceremonies of Power* (London: Continuum, 2008), 209; Paul Kléber Monod, *The Power of Kings: Monarchy and Religion in Europe, 1589-1715* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 227.

<sup>10</sup> “Nell Gwynne, 1669,” in *Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660-1714*, ed. George deForest Lord (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1963), 1:420. There is a whole separate literature on the portrayal of Charles II’s body in a pornographic sense. See: Rachel Weil, “Sometimes a Scepter is only a Scepter: Pornography and Politics in Restoration England,” in *The Invention of Pornography*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1993), 125-156; Robert Woods, “Charles II and the Politics of Sex and Scandal,” in *State, Sovereigns and Society in Early Modern England: Essays in Honour of A.J. Slavin*, ed. Charles Carlton (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 119-136.

<sup>11</sup> For Elizabeth I’s sexuality see Marjorie Swann, “Sex and the Single Queen: The Erotic Lives of Elizabeth Tudor in Seventeenth-century England,” in *Queens & Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 224-241 and Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994). For James I’s homosexuality see Michael Young, *King James and the History of Homosexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 2000) and David M. Bergeron, “Writing King James’s Sexuality,” in *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 334-370. For Henry VIII’s manly virtues on display see Tatiana C. String, “Projecting Masculinity: Henry VIII’s Codpiece” in *Henry VIII and His Afterlives: Literature, Politics, and Art*, ed. Mark Rankin, Christopher Highley, and

the few times that the natural body of the monarch was offered up to the public, was when a legitimate heir was produced. Going back to the age of Elizabeth I, Kevin Sharpe notes that “the sexual royal body was a potent symbol ... because it promised dynastic continuity and national security.”<sup>12</sup> When Charles II failed to provide such assurances, the Catholic King James II came to wear the crown and was on the throne when the Revolution of 1688 occurred. His successors included three more Stuarts whose bodies failed to produce an heir capable of outliving them. As a result, the Hanoverians ascended to the throne in 1714, maintaining their dynasty for nearly two hundred years. Thus, the body of the monarch, its strength and fecundity, could have profound consequences for the fate of the nation. No wonder people wanted to know about the royal body.

### Scope of Project

This dissertation focuses on the English monarchy between the Glorious Revolution in 1688 and the eve of the French Revolution in 1789.<sup>13</sup> A central argument of this work is the belief that the difficult process of re-establishing the concept of the king’s two bodies after the Restoration was, overall, successful. Although I disagree with his general claims that an *ancien regime* existed in England into the nineteenth century, J.C.D. Clark has shown that ideas about the divine right of kings and their mystical nature survived the Commonwealth and did not instantly disappear because of the Revolution of

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John N. King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 143-159 and Greg Walker, “‘A Great Guy with His Chopper’? The Sex Life of Henry VIII on Screen and in the Flesh,” in *Tudorism Historical Imagination and the Appropriation of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Tatiana C. String and Marcus Bull (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 223-242.

<sup>12</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 75.

<sup>13</sup> I specifically refer to the monarchy as English and not British, even after the Act of Union in 1707, because I have not yet looked at the process of demystification in Scotland.

1688.<sup>14</sup> In particular, this dissertation explores how the sacred bodies of the monarch were commented on in public, in particular in newspapers and other forms of print culture, and argues that by examining the depth and type of reportage on the royal health and the sovereign's body, it is possible to see the irregular timeline of how the monarchy was demystified during the long eighteenth century. Additionally, this work argues that even after discussions of the monarch's body and health were no longer proscribed, the subject retained a slight taboo. Furthermore, the dissertation provides a prosopographical examination of those individuals near the English kings and queens who helped supply the confidential information about the sovereign's health which precipitated the process of demystification. The importance of this work is that it provides a more nuanced discussion of the process of demystification, over a wider period, than previous works. Moreover, it shows that there is an under-studied connection among the history of medicine, the court, and the rise of the public sphere. Indeed, as opposed to traditional scholarship which suggests that the public sphere was opposed to the court, this paper shows that as the eighteenth century progressed, the monarchy, on occasion, exploited the press' desire to report on the English royal family by using the monarch's health to defuse tense political situations.

### **Historiography**

With so much of this dissertation focusing on the English monarchs, biographies provide an important jumping off point for discussion. Generally speaking, biographies of the later Stuarts and early Hanoverians fall into three categories. The first category

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<sup>14</sup> J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

involves works that fail to recognize the influence of the monarch's health on political, social, and cultural developments. Such works include Joyce Marlow's *The Life and Times of George I* (1973) and Charles Trench's *George II* (1973).<sup>15</sup> Marlow mentions only the final illness of George I, while Trench fails to spend any time discussing the health of George II, although he does discuss the important changes which occurred after the death of Queen Caroline. The second category of biography includes those works that provide significant amounts of medical information, but fail to adequately connect the monarch's bodily constitution with public perceptions of health. Stephen Baxter's *William III* (1966), David Green's *Queen Anne* (1970), and John Van der Kiste's *George II and Queen Caroline* (1997) all suffer from this shortcoming.<sup>16</sup> They provide extremely detailed accounts of monarchical health, especially Green's work, but without pairing these issues of health and sickness with the responses they generated, these works miss an opportunity to bring alive the voices of the sovereign's subjects.

The third category of biography include those works which successfully connect the importance of a monarch's health or infirmity with the political, social, and cultural developments of the reign, and provide insight into how subjects responded when the sovereign was ill. Fine examples of this approach include John Brooke's *King George III* (1972), Edward Gregg's *Queen Anne* (1980), Ragnhild Hatton's *George I Elector and King* (1978), Jeremy Black's *George III America's List King* (2006) and *George II:*

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<sup>15</sup> Joyce Marlow, *The Life and Times of George I* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973) and Charles Trench, *George II* (London: Butler & Tanner, Ltd., 1973).

<sup>16</sup> Stephen B. Baxter, *William III* (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd., 1966); David Green, *Queen Anne* (London: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd., 1970); John Van der Kiste, *King George II and Queen Caroline* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1997).

*Puppet of the Politicians?* (2007), Andrew Thompson's *George II King and Elector* (2011), and Anne Somerset's *Queen Anne: The Politics of Passion* (2012).<sup>17</sup> The connections among monarchical illness, societal developments, and public reception are easiest to make for the reign of George III, but all of the works listed above succeed in at least recognizing such a connection is a subject worthy of attention. Unfortunately, as useful as these biographies are, by their nature they fail to sufficiently address changes before or after their subject's life, including shifts in public perceptions of monarchical health. This dissertation overcomes this hurdle by connecting the importance of the monarch's health through the reigns of six sovereigns.

Also traced through these reigns is the development and expansion of the public sphere. Starting with the 1989 translation into English of Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, scholars across the world have noted the importance of this topic.<sup>18</sup> As the basis on which many other studies develop and differ, this particular work deserves a more detailed discussion of its argument. Briefly, Habermas argued that the middle-class which emerged in eighteenth-century England came together in public, mainly in coffeehouses, to discuss issues which impacted the inhabitants of the nation. In particular, he stresses that before this period, there had not

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<sup>17</sup> John Brooke, *King George III* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972); Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne*, New ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Ragnhild Hatton, *George I Elector and King* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978); Jeremy Black, *George III America's Last King* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Jeremy Black, *George II Puppet of the Politicians?* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007); Andrew Thompson, *George II King and Elector* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Anne Somerset, *Queen Anne The Politics of Passion: A Biography* (London: Harper Press, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

been a public sphere, as the monarch was the only public individual, and everyone else comprised a passive audience merely listening to his or her pronouncements. As a result of the discussions which took place in these public settings, Habermas argued that the interests and will of the people limited the power of the state in the eighteenth century. However, this process eventually broke down as a result of an increasingly significant press that allowed the government and politicians to regain the central position in society while remaining unhindered by the restraints of public opinion.

In the immediate aftermath of this seminal work's translation into English, the public sphere appeared in a variety of scholarly works; however, by the mid-to-late 1990s, a critical tone regarding some of Habermas' conclusions was emerging in the literature. These critiques made five main points: 1) The public sphere existed earlier than Habermas argued; 2) There was more than one public sphere; 3) The public sphere was never as neat and orderly as he described, while the description he did provide failed to elaborate on the nature of the people within the coffeehouses; 4) There were women in the public sphere, even though Habermas did not account for them and; 5) The court was a semi-public sphere with relatively easy access and a central place in the process of disseminating information to the wider populace.<sup>19</sup> While the scholarship focusing on the

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<sup>19</sup> Seyla Benhabib, "Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 73-98; John Brewer, "This, That, and the Other: Public, Social, and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Shifting the Boundaries*, ed. Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 1-21; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 109-142; Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "The Public Sphere: Models and Boundaries," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 99-108; Alan Houston and Steve Pincus, eds., *A Nation Transformed: England after the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); P. Howell, "Public Space and the Public Sphere: Political Theory and the Historical Geography of Modernity," *Environment & Planning D: Society & Space* 11, no.

public sphere continues to expand and approach the subject from a variety of angles, it has become clear that the concept of a public sphere is more complicated than originally thought and that it was vitally important in politics from the sixteenth century forward. This dissertation shows that studying the contents of print culture within the public sphere is one of the best ways to observe the demystification of English monarchy during the eighteenth century.

Another historiography central to the dissertation, and one that ties in closely with the public sphere, is the rise of the free press in England. This literature can be broken down into three broad categories: studies that deal with the logistics of the press (publishers, circulation totals, costs, postal rates, advertisements, and so forth), works that focus on the reception of newspapers, pamphlets, ballads, broadsides, and the other ephemera of print culture, and scholarship focused on the restrictions imposed by government censorship. All three components are important to any successful study of the press in England. Through the use of the logistical studies, it is clear that newspapers reached a wide and broad segment of English society.<sup>20</sup> Since the lapse of the Licensing

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3 (1993): 303-322; Eric Laurier and Chris Philo, "A Parcel of Muddling Muckworms'-Revisiting Habermas and the English Coffee-houses," *Social and Cultural Geography* 8, no. 2 (2007): 259-81; Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, eds, *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Brian Cowan, "Geoffrey Holmes and the Public Sphere: Augustan Historiography from Post-Namierite to the Post-Habermasian," *Parliamentary History* 28, no. 1 (2009): 166-178; Richard Coulton, "'The Darling of the Temple-Coffee-House Club' Science, Sociability and Satire in Early Eighteenth-Century London," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 1 (2012): 43-65; R.O. Bucholz, "Going to Court in 1700: A Visitor's Guide," *The Court Historian* V (December 2000): 181-215; John Brooke, *King George III* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972).

<sup>20</sup> A.S. Collins, *Authorship in the Days of Johnson: Being a Study of the Relation between Author, Patron, Publisher, and Public, 1726-1800* (London: A.M. Kelley, 1927); R.S. Crane and F.B. Kye, *A Census of British Newspapers and Periodicals 1620-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1927); Ian Maxted, *The London Book Trades 1775-1800* (London: I. Maxted, 1980); H.R. Plomer and H.G. Aldis, eds., *Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers Who Were at Work in England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1688 to 1725* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); H.R. Plomer, G.H. Bushnell, and E.R. Dix,



Act in 1695, printers had secured the liberty to produce material covering a diverse range of topics without having to first receive approval of the Licensor of the Press and the public eagerly took to reading everything available. Although even after 1695 it was possible for publishers and authors to face prosecution for libel, it was possible to evade punishment. As Jonathan Swift once explained to a friend, he had developed four methods to avoid libel accusations while still being able to comment on relevant figures and political matters.<sup>21</sup> These workarounds were sometimes applied to health reports pertaining to a “Great Personage” or other such terms to conceal the author from any possible charges.

The efforts of Swift and other authors to provide themselves a defense in case of prosecution remained important through at least the middle of the eighteenth century, as the Slanderous Reports Act of 1378 was still used to prosecute offenders.<sup>22</sup> This act urged that “none be so hardy to devise, speak, or to tell any false News, Lyes, or other such

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eds, *A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers Who Were at Work in England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1726 to 1775* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Henry L. Snyder, “The Circulation of Newspapers in the Reign of Queen Anne,” *The Library* 23 (1968): 206-235; James R. Sutherland, “The Circulation of Newspapers and Literary Periodicals, 1700-30,” *The Library* IV, no. xv (1934): 110-124; R. M. Wiles, *Freshest Advices. Early Provincial Newspapers in England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1965).

<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Political Tracts 1713-1789*, ed. Herbert Davis and Irvin Ehrenpreis (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), 54. These methods included not printing the subject’s full name, insinuation, celebrating the actions of someone exactly the opposite of the person you wanted to insult, and by using nicknames. Swift also perfected the use of allegory and irony but in some cases, such as *Gulliver’s Travels*, the allegory was so thick that the author avoided prosecution but at the cost that the readers could not make the connections to the political system then operating in England. For more of this see Donald Thomas, *A Long Time Burning: The History of Literary Censorship in England* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 56-61.

<sup>22</sup> Laurence Hanson, *Government and the Press 1695-1763* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 15-16.

false things ... whereof Discord or any Slander might rise within the Same Realm.”<sup>23</sup> The legislation applied to discussion of the monarch’s health since false reports about his/her bodily constitution might cause insurrection, political abuse, or harm the economic well-being of the nation.<sup>24</sup> One of Queen Anne’s earliest royal proclamations, on March 26, 1702, stressed that the old laws were still in effect and that “we will Proceed with the utmost Severity and Rigour of Law, against all such Persons who shall be Guilty of” “Spreading False News ... [or] Publishing of Irreligious and Seditious Papers and Libels.”<sup>25</sup> Throughout the long eighteenth century, it remained dangerous to libel the sovereign, as s/he possessed “a superior degree of dignity and personal splendour, in respect and veneration.”<sup>26</sup>

Closely tied to the issue of libeling the health of the monarch were aspects of censorship which lingered into the nineteenth century. Fredrick Siebert’s *Freedom of the Press in England 1476-1776* (1952), often considered the leading work on the subject of censorship, examines the use of seditious libel prosecutions to control the press over the

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<sup>23</sup> William Hawkins, *The Statutes at Large, from Magna Charta to the Seventh Year of King George the Second, Inclusive* (London: John Baskett, 1735), 1:319. The original act occurred under Edward I as part of the Statute of Westminster 1275 and had been modified by the Statute of Gloucester 1378 during the reign of Richard II.

<sup>24</sup> As far back as the twelfth century, connections existed between the health of the king and the health of the kingdom and how deficits in the former damaged the prospects of the latter. See Wendy J. Turner, “A Cure for the King means Health for the Country: The Mental and Physical Health of Henry VI” in *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, ed. Wendy Turner (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 180.

<sup>25</sup> *London Gazette*, March 26-30, 1702, Issue 3796. “By the Queen, A Proclamation, For Restraining the Spreading False News, and Printing and Publishing of Irreligious and Seditious Papers and Libels.”

<sup>26</sup> Francis Ludlow Holt, *The Law of Libel In Which is Contained A General History of This Law in the Ancient Codes and of Its Introduction, and Successive Alterations, In the Law of England*, 2nd, ed. (London: J. Butterworth and Son, 1816), 99-100.

course of three hundred years.<sup>27</sup> He argues that seditious libel was the main form of regulating printed material and that the government used it concurrently with the licensing acts of the seventeenth century. This dissertation challenges Siebert's beliefs that Queen Anne's reign was "the low point in ... control, enforcement, and compliance" of press regulation, and that compliance with such regulations was high during the reign of George II.<sup>28</sup> In "The Development of the Law of Seditious Libel and the Control of the Press" (1985), Philip Hamburger has argued that Siebert incorrectly interpreted the definition of seditious libel and that rather than being a way of prosecuting offenders while the licensing acts were still in effect, it was not until around 1700 that the government created a new way to regulate the press, as the last licensing act had lapsed and treason prosecutions were no longer effective.<sup>29</sup> In order to fulfill this need, the government created a new definition of seditious libel, in large part through the efforts of Chief Justice John Holt. Donald Thomas' *A Long Time Burning: The History of Literary Censorship in England* (1969), building slightly on Siebert's work, asserts that there were no acts passed between 1695 and 1789 that specifically censored the press, but Stamp Acts in 1712, 1776, 1789, and 1797 all raised the cost of newspapers in an effort to limit their circulation totals.<sup>30</sup> There was, moreover, passage of the Theatrical Licensing Act of 1737 that required the approval of the Lord Chamberlain before any play could be

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<sup>27</sup> Fredrick Seaton Siebert, *Freedom of the Press in England 1476-1776: The Rise and Decline of Government Controls* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1952).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 2-4.

<sup>29</sup> Philip Hamburger, "The Development of the Law of Seditious Libel and the Control of the Press," *Stanford Law Review* 37, no. 66 (1985): 661-765.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas, *A Long Time Burning*.

staged.<sup>31</sup> All the press attacks against Sir Robert Walpole at the time had raised fears that a similar licensing act for the press would pass, but no legislation materialized. Thomas' work, which discusses libel cases involving the king's body and dignity (but not his health), establishes that when such prosecutions reached trial, the jury could only decide whether or not the accused had published the work in question. Until the Libel Act of 1792, it was the judge's determination whether or not the publication was libelous, and he was almost always in-step with the government.<sup>32</sup> The last significant act of censorship during the long eighteenth century was the 1799 Unlawful Societies Act which restricted the press as all "printers, letter founders, and printing press manufacturers" had to register with the Clerk of the Peace and, in an effort to quash attempts at anonymous publishing, the name and address of the printer had to appear on every publication.<sup>33</sup> This act limited some of the overtly political tracts from appearing in England during the French Revolution, although its overall effectiveness was questionable.

A number of important studies that deal with the connection between politics and the press have appeared throughout the years. Tony Claydon's *William III and the Godly Revolution* (1996) shows the importance of sermons, court ceremonies, and the work of a close group of propagandists associated with Gilbert Burnet in helping place and keep William and Mary on the throne, while also stressing their sacred natures and improving their public image.<sup>34</sup> For Anne's reign, David Stevens' *Party Politics and English*

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<sup>31</sup> Frank Fowell and Frank Palmer, *Censorship in England* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1913), 136.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, *A Long Time Burning*, 142.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

*Journalism* (1967) and J.A. Downie's *Robert Harley and the Press* (1979) shift the focus from ceremony and religion to the power of newspapers and pamphlets in shaping public opinion.<sup>35</sup> In particular, Downie's monograph shows how in an age of political strife, it was important to maintain control of the press. The main focus is on the efforts of Robert Harley, eventually Earl of Oxford, to use writers like Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe to create and support a concerted propaganda policy that supported the ministry's objectives while at the same time prosecuting and bribing individuals working against this position. However, this system broke down after the succession of the Hanoverians and the removal of Oxford from his position as Lord Treasurer.

A comprehensive work encompassing print culture during the reign of the first two Georges does not yet exist, although there are a number of fine monographs that cover parts of this period. One of the older works is Laurence Hanson's *Government and the Press, 1695-1763* (1936).<sup>36</sup> In this book, Hanson traces the efforts of the English government to suppress ideas that appeared in the press that were contrary to what the ministry desired. For the purposes of this dissertation, his greatest contribution is his examination of libel laws and historic precedents involving the illegality of publishing "false news pertaining to the King."<sup>37</sup> Hanson shows the difficulties encountered in

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<sup>34</sup> Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> J.A. Downie, *Robert Harley and the Press: Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Age of Swift and Defoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); David Stevens, *Party Politics and English Journalism 1702-1742* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967). Also see: W.A. Speck, *Literature and Society in Eighteenth-Century England 1680-1820* (London: Longman, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> Laurence Hanson, *Government and the Press*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

prosecuting authors during this time and that even with a strongly supported government press, opposition ideas remained readily available for readers of the newspapers. Michael Harris' *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole* (1987) expands on Hanson's work and provides details on the complexities of the newspapers that developed during and after the ministerial tenure of Robert Walpole.<sup>38</sup> Harris stresses the government support provided to newspapers that sided with the ministry, and the efforts made to spread such information through the free usage of the Post Office. It is also clear that while Lord Treasurer, Walpole used Secret Service funds, but also the activities of the Treasury Solicitor, Nicholas Paxton, to influence and control the contents of the public sphere. Although Harris describes prosecutions during this time as "spasmodic," he shows that Paxton reviewed all published pamphlets and newspapers and reported seditious information to the Secretaries of State.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, these works do not address the intersection of reportage on the monarch's health and the libelous and seditious prosecutions occurring during the 1730s and 1740s. My dissertation shows how, during this time, the opposition exploited a lax approach to prosecuting reportage on royal health to advance their political objectives. With the resignation of Walpole in 1742, this policy of review and ministry-supported propaganda declined significantly, although even at its height it had not been successful at removing all opposition newspapers from the public sphere. Bob Harris' *A Patriot Press* (1993) carries a similar approach to the period of the 1740s, after Walpole's resignation, and shows that under the Pelhams, there was not a

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole: A Study of the Origins of the Modern English Press* (London: Associated University Presses, 1987). Also see: Robert Harris, *A Patriot Press: National Politics and the London Press in the 1740s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>39</sup> Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole*, 127.

similarly extensive attempt to control the press as had been the case earlier in the reign of George II.

Turning to the reign of George III, Arthur Aspinall's *Politics and the Press, c. 1780-1850* (1949), was one of the first works that attempted to show how a significant change occurred beginning in the 1780s, when he sees newspapers as being heavily controlled and in the pocket of either the ministry and opposition, to an increasingly free press during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Aspinall's is a rather whiggish account of straightforward progress that has since been dismantled by later works. In particular, Robert Rea's *The English Press in Politics* (1963) and Hannah Barker's *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (1998) show the increasing influence of public opinion in determining what newspapers published, rather than financial incentives provided by political parties.<sup>41</sup> It was during this period of powerful public opinion and fewer restrictions on the press that the final demystification of George III took place.

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<sup>40</sup> Arthur Aspinall, *Politics and the Press c. 1780-1850* (London: Home & Van Thal Ltd, 1949).

<sup>41</sup> Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) and Robert Rea, *The English Press in Politics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963). Also see: Lucyle Werkmeister, *The London Daily Press 1772-1792* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963); John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Ian R. Christie, "British Newspapers in the Later Georgian Age," in *Myth and Reality in Late Eighteenth-Century British Politics and Other Papers*, ed. Ian R. Christie (London: Macmillan, 1970): 311-33; H.T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); John Brewer, "The Misfortunes of Lord Bute: A Case-Study in Eighteenth-Century Political Argument and Public Opinion," *The Historical Journal* 16, no. 1 (1973): 3-43; Rocco Lawrence Capraro, "Typographic Politics: The Impact of Printing on the Political Life of Eighteenth-Century England, 1714-1772" (PhD. diss., Washington University, 1984); Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows, eds., *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Aled Jones, *Power of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1996).

As restrictions on the press lessened in the 1740s, and the size of newspapers increased, editors of the press began filling their periodicals with additional coverage of the royal family. Frank Prochaska's *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (1995) and Matthew Kilburn's dissertation "Royalty and Public in Britain: 1714-1789" (1997) provide overviews of how and in what ways the Hanoverian royal family became a central story in the expanding newspapers of the eighteenth century.<sup>42</sup> Both show how the royal family's involvement in charities ranging from hospitals to anti-slavery campaigns helped create a public discourse of the monarch becoming a moral symbol of the nation, rather than an active political figure. Coupled with these developments, the reign of George III saw the sovereign embrace a new style of domestic kingship that gave birth to the image of Farmer George and a sovereign who was more country gentleman than unreachable vice-regent of God's will.

With all the attention paid to the royal family during the eighteenth century, and the size it reached under George III, it was inevitable that the scandals and flaws of these individuals became fodder for public consumption. This was especially true because, as Simon Morgan has shown, a celebrity culture was already emerging by the 1760s.<sup>43</sup> There were more celebrities than just members of the royal family, however, as accounts of actresses, authors, politicians, and social leaders in fashion filled the gossip columns in the newspapers and magazines. Anna Clark, Matthew Kinservik, Kristin Samuelian, and

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<sup>42</sup> Frank Prochaska, *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) and Matthew Kilburn, "Royalty and Public in Britain: 1714-1789" (PhD diss, Oxford University, 1997).

<sup>43</sup> Simon Morgan, "Celebrity-Academic 'Pseudo-Event' or a Useful Concept for Historians?," *Cultural and Social History* 8, no. 1 (2011): 95-114.



James Mulvihill have each tackled, in their own way, how the sexual failings of the nobility and members of the royal family came to occupy a central part of the celebrity experience and provide material that the public followed closely.<sup>44</sup> Of all the works that deal with the increased reportage of the royal family and the rise of celebrity culture, only Kilburn and Samuelian touch on the importance of royal health in helping to fuel both developments. Kilburn's focus is how the celebrations after George III's recovery in 1789 helped bind the sovereign and his subjects closer together. Samuelian, on the other hand, focuses on how pamphlets, satirical prints, and novels humanized the Prince of Wales during the Regency Crisis. Neither of these works examines the actual accounts of George III's health that circulated throughout London and the country from October 1788 to March 1789, nor how the reading public responded to them. My dissertation fills this void.

Although none of the celebrity-focused monographs sufficiently examine the health of George III, studies that focus on the medical history of the English monarchy, like *The Death of Kings: A Medical History of the Kings and Queens of England* (2000) by Clifford Brewer and Frederick Holmes' *The Sickly Stuarts* (2003), are only a small segment of the larger history of medicine.<sup>45</sup> The works of Brewer, Holmes, and others are useful in narrowing down possible reasons for a king or queen's health problems, but

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<sup>44</sup> Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Matthew J. Kinservik, *Sex, Scandal, and Celebrity in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Kristin Flieger Samuelian, *Royal Romances: Sex, Scandal, and Monarchy in Print, 1780-1821* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); James Mulvihill, *Notorious Facts: Publicity in Romantic England, 1780-1830* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Clifford Brewer, *The Death of Kings: A Medical History of the Kings and Queens of England* (London: Abson Books, 2000) and Frederick Holmes, *The Sickly Stuarts* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 2003).

they make no attempt to connect this information to the world the monarchs occupied.

Another segment of the history of medicine includes the plethora of monographs and articles published during the last twenty-five years that take a social history approach to medicine and explore the experiences of patients and practitioners. Roy Porter and other scholars wrote numerous fine pieces of scholarship on this subject, but by their nature, their focus is not royal patients or royal physicians.<sup>46</sup> Another branch of the scholarship touching on the history of medicine focuses on the professional societies and organizational development. Works including Harold Cook's *Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London* (1986) and Irvine Loudon's "Medical Practitioners 1750-1850 and the Period of Medical Reform in Britain" (1992) detail the factious relationships among the apothecaries, the College of Physicians, the Royal Society, and the Barbers and Surgeons companies, but the focus is internal disputes and legislative measures, not the actual practice of those involved with the guilds and companies.<sup>47</sup> Finally, a still developing segment of the history of medicine locates the subject in the expanding print culture of the long eighteenth century. Elizabeth Furdell, Mark Dawson, and others have studied how medical knowledge was printed and disseminated as books and pamphlets,

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<sup>46</sup> Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason: The Modern Foundations of Body and Soul* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003); Dorothy and Roy Porter, *Patient's Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Harold Cook, *The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Irvine Loudon, "Medical Practitioners 1750-1850 and the Period of Medical Reform in Britain," in *Medicine in Society: Historical Essays*, ed. Andrew Wear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 219-248; N.D. Jewson, "Medical Knowledge and the Patronage System in Eighteenth-Century England," *Sociology* 8 (1974): 369-385; Roger French and Andrew Wear, eds., *Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Andrew Cunningham and Roger French, eds., *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Steve Sturdy, ed., *Medicine, Health and the Public Sphere in Britain 1600-2000* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

but also through advertisements in newspapers.<sup>48</sup> For the purposes of this dissertation, the most important production of this group is Roy Porter's article "Lay Medical Knowledge in the Eighteenth Century: The Evidence of the *Gentleman's Magazine*" (1985). Unlike the other works noted above, Porter connects an increase in the medical knowledge of the lay public, beginning in the 1730s, with an expanding interest in all facets of the ruling family, including the status and particulars of their health. This dissertation delves deeper into this connection, as part of the larger process of demystification, and uses the newspapers, published more frequently than the once-a-month *The Gentleman's Magazine*, to provide a more nuanced examination of this process.

The most ambiguous historiography for this dissertation revolves around the topic of demystification, sometimes associated with desacralization.<sup>49</sup> My definition of demystification is the process by which the curtain of privacy surrounding the natural body of the monarch lost its effectiveness, versus desacralization, which referred to the process of removing the religious undertones connected to the two bodies of the monarch, a process which I do not believe has ever fully occurred. Robert Zaller's "Breaking the Vessels: The Desacralization of Monarchy in Early Modern England" (1998), looks at the

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<sup>48</sup> Roy Porter, "Lay Medical Knowledge in the Eighteenth Century: The Evidence of the *Gentleman's Magazine*," *Medical History* 29 (1985): 138-168. Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta, *Medical Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Mark S. Dawson, "First Impressions: Newspaper Advertisements and Early Modern English Body Imaging, 1651-1750," *Journal of British Studies* 50, no. 2 (April 2011): 277-306; Elizabeth Furdell, *Publishing and Medicine in Early Modern England* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002).

<sup>49</sup> Most works that study desacralization or demystification focus on France. Ellen McClure, *Sun Spots and the Sun King: Sovereignty and Mediation in Seventeenth-Century France*. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Jeffrey Merrick, *Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

challenges posed by the execution of Charles I to the idea of sacred monarchy.<sup>50</sup> Zaller ultimately concludes that the responsibility for repairing this damage was beyond the capabilities of Charles II, whose approach to kingship did not generate the necessary level of reverence. Paul Monod also touched on the subject of desacralization in his study *The Power of Kings* (1999).<sup>51</sup> Monod looks at the situation in England, but also evidence from most of Europe, and shows a transition from religion being at the center of society, to the interests of the developing nation state taking precedence. Along with this shift, the authority of monarchy transformed from a sacral backing to being the representative of the people's collective consciousness.

Kevin Sharpe has spent the most time and gone into the greatest depth on the subject of desacralization, covering both the Tudor and Stuart dynasties in his trilogy: *Selling the Tudor Monarchy* (2009), *Image Wars* (2010), and *Rebranding Rule* (2013). While his main focus in *Selling the Tudor Monarchy* is on the contested creation of power and representation in visual, ritual, and verbal constructions, Sharpe explains how efforts under the Tudors to create an image of legitimacy and viability made the monarch accessible, especially during the reign of Elizabeth when she attempted to identify herself with her subjects.<sup>52</sup> Although I agree with Sharpe's claims that under the Tudors desacralization occurred, I do not believe there was a significant amount. If the monarch

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Zaller, "Breaking the Vessels: The Desacralization of Monarchy in Early Modern England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 3 (1998): 757-778.

<sup>51</sup> Monod, 295-315.

<sup>52</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy 1660-1714* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

had been desacralized to a meaningful level, the actions and approach taken by James I in espousing his ideas regarding divine right kingship would have received an even harsher response than they did. In *Image Wars*, Sharpe explains the tension which occurred in the pamphlet wars leading up to and during the Civil Wars and how they were part of the process of constructing images of the king on both sides. The execution of Charles I helped re-sacralize monarchy by making him into a martyr, which allowed a veil of mystery to be constructed around him and his heir. Finally, in *Rebranding Rule*, the author shows the efforts made by Charles II to walk a fine line between ceremony and mystification on the one hand and accessibility on the other. James II failed to strike an appropriate balance and the task remained difficult for William III to achieve, leading to some degree of desacralization and demystification, although sacred ideas remained through the end of Anne's reign. As I discuss a little later, I do not agree with Sharpe's claim that a significant break in sacred monarchy occurred at the end of William's reign. Tying in nicely with *Rebranding Rule* is Mark Knights' *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain* (2006).<sup>53</sup> With a focus on the development of political parties from the late 1670s through the early 1720s, Knights shows that there was an eruption of popular participation in government and that competing political parties published accounts in an attempt to misrepresent their opponents to the newly-engaged politicized society. Knights also shows an increase in the number of addresses to the Crown on non-legislative matters which is indicative of the further lessening of the

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<sup>53</sup> Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

mystery surrounding the monarch in the sense that people were willing to directly communicate with the king or queen about more personal matters.

As useful as the studies by Knights and Sharpe are, neither scholar carries their discussion very far into the Hanoverian dynasty. Additionally, despite recognizing how many different avenues existed for creating the image of politicians and monarchs, they fail to adequately examine newspapers, instead focusing on pamphlets, sermons, and visual images. One need only look at a contemporary source to see the importance placed on newspapers: “The bent and genius of the age is best known, in a free country, by the pamphlets and papers that come daily out, as the sense of parties and sometimes the voice of the nation.”<sup>54</sup> This dissertation fills this historiographic gap and carries the conversation of image representation, using the body and health of the monarch as a lens, into 1789 when the apex of demystification occurred, which in the long run actually helped the monarchy survive the threat of republicanism spurred by the French Revolution.

Sharpe recognizes that a degree of mystical monarchy survived the Revolution of 1688, albeit lessened, and continued through the reign of Queen Anne.<sup>55</sup> However, he lays a lot of the damage done to the image of the monarchy at the feet of William III, who, he argues, was not in England often enough and who failed to promote the ceremony and splendor of the court to keep up with the idea of mystification.<sup>56</sup> As a

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<sup>54</sup> White Kennet, *A Register and Chronicle Ecclesiastical and Civil* (London: R. Williamson, 1728), 10.

<sup>55</sup> Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule*, 554.

culmination of these failures and the ultimate division of the natural body from the body politic, Sharpe highlights the publication of a brief report on the dissection of the king's body that occurred after his death.<sup>57</sup> While the publication of the autopsy report is an interesting development, Andrew Barclay has conclusively shown that in terms of size, splendor, and ceremony, the court of William and Mary was on par, if not higher, than any other Stuart.<sup>58</sup> Sharpe's examination of Anne's reign led him to claim that during her lifetime "the frailties of the royal – and female – body were now public and publicized."<sup>59</sup> This dissertation challenges this claim by looking at the (mostly successful) efforts made to conceal such frailties from confirmation in the expanding print culture and explain that when they did appear, there was a political purpose behind such dissemination. Restraints remained on what people could and did write about the monarch's health well into the reign of the Hanoverians.

Issues of gender and class also contributed to discussions of the natural body in the public sphere.<sup>60</sup> Although gender is not a central component of this dissertation,

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 504. To see the new types of ceremony and pageantry that occurred during the reign of the Hanoverians, which helped maintain a level of mystification, see Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> *The Report of the Physicians and Surgeons, Commanded to Assist at the Dissecting the Body of his Late Majesty at Kensington March the Tenth MDCCI/II* (London: John Nutt, 1702). While I agree with Sharpe that this was a new development, I do not view it as a permanent trend, as neither Anne nor George I had their bodies publicized in the same way upon their deaths.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Barclay, "William's Court as King," in *Redefining William III: The Impact of the King-Stadholder in International Context*, ed. Esther Mijers and David Onnekink (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 241-261.

<sup>59</sup> Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule*, 670.

<sup>60</sup> Studies involving gender in both the Stuart and Hanoverian periods are numerous. See: Robert Bucholz, "'The Stomach of a Queen,' or Size Matters: Gender, Body Image, and the Historical Reputation of Queen Anne," in *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 242-272; Rachel Weil, "Royal Flesh,

comparisons made among the health reportage of Mary II and Anne, and Caroline suggest the change in reportage over time had less to do with gender and more to do with Enlightenment principles and the development of a less restricted press.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, the coverage of Queen Caroline's ailments was more extensive and graphic than that for Queen Mary II and Queen Anne combined. The same periodicals that include political complaints also show an interest in the activities of the monarch, the movements of the royal family, and developments within their personal lives.<sup>62</sup> Furthering the demystification that occurred under Hanoverian rule were the rise of the English middle

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Gender, and the Construction of Monarchy," in *The Body of the Queen: Gender and Rule in the Courtly World 1500-2000*, ed. Regina Schulte (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 88-100; Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed., *Queenship in Europe, 1660-1815: The Role of the Consort* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed., *Queenship in Britain 1660-1837* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family and Political Argument in England 1680-1714* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Toni Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture, 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jacqueline Eales, *Women in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (London: University College London Press, 1998); Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Mihoko Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects: Gender, the Political Nation, and Literary Form in England, 1588-1688* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003); Clare McManus, ed., *Women and Culture at the Courts of the Stuart Queens* (New York: MacMillan Corporation, 2003); Louis Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender, and Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Katherine Crawford, *Perilous Performances: Gender and Regency in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Matthew McCormack, *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); A.D. Harvey, *Sex in Georgian England: Attitudes and Prejudices from the 1720s to the 1820s* (London: Duckworth, 1994); William Stafford, "Gentlemanly Masculinities as Represented by the Late Georgian *Gentleman's Magazine*," *History* 93, no. 309 (2008): 47-68; Susan Amussen, "'The Part of a Christian Man': The Cultural Politics of Manhood in Early Modern England," in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays presented to David Underdown*, ed. Mark Kishlansky and Susan Amussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 213-33; Clarissa Campbell Orr, "The Feminization of the Monarchy 1780-1910: Royal Masculinity and Female Empowerment," in *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present*, ed. Andrzej Olechnowicz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 76-107.

<sup>61</sup> Although Queen Caroline was only a consort, while Mary II and Anne were sovereigns, people in the 1730s believed that Caroline was the real power in the executive so I feel comfortable including her in this discussion. Unrelated to gender, the coverage of her health as a mere consort was more detailed than for Prince George, Anne's husband, or George I's mistresses.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 80-1.



class and the increasing importance placed on the domestic life and private qualities of leading politicians and royalty, an image which King George III and Queen Charlotte helped popularize.<sup>63</sup> By the end of the late eighteenth century, during the Regency Crisis of 1788 to 1789, the public learned about the monarch's natural and political bodies at his most indisposed moment. As Linda Colley and Marilyn Morris have shown, this humanization of the monarch completed the process of demystification, but rather than spelling the end of royal rule in England, the exposure of the king's two bodies led to an apotheosis of monarchy. The infirmities and domestic qualities of the king made him appear as an icon worthy of exaltation and emulation, which elevated him as if he were a member of the aristocracy, while still cloaking him with the prestige and dignity of a sovereign. This process went hand-in-hand with the monarch's diminishing authority, which accelerated at the end of the eighteenth century, and created a shift towards a more symbolic form of rule. Eventually, through the actions of George III's children, this reverence decreased until finally another dose of mystification was necessary towards the

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<sup>63</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, rev. ed. (Oxon, Routledge, 2002); Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Wilson, *The Sense of the People*; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*. Rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); John Cannon, "The Survival of the British Monarchy: The Prothero Lecture," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 36 (1986): 143-164; Simon Schama, "The Domestication of Majesty: Royal Family Portraiture, 1500-1850," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, no. 1 (1986): 155-183; Dror Wahrman, "'Middle-Class' Domesticity Goes Public: Gender, Class, and Politics from Queen Caroline to Queen Victoria," *The Journal of British Studies* 32, no. 4 (Oct. 1993): 396-432; Phyllis Deutsch, "Moral Trespass in Georgian London: Gaming, Gender, and Electoral Politics in the Age of George III," *Historical Journal* 39 (1996): 637-56; Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*. On the subject of public vs. private see: Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Mulvihill, *Notorious Facts*; Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar, eds., *Public and Private in Thought and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, eds., *A History of Private Life*, 5 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1989); Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe, eds., *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995). This interest in public versus private was not confined to just the monarchy, but also the aristocracy and politicians.

end of the nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> This dissertation shows how the demystification culminated in 1788 to 1789 and clarifies that this was the culmination of a slow and irregular process, rather than a sudden manifestation of openness regarding the monarch's health and body.

While showing how this demystification played out in the expanding public sphere, this dissertation also casts light on some of the individuals involved in helping create and dismantle the mystery around the monarchy. Rather than examining the most well-known politicians of the Privy Council or Cabinet government that developed during this time, my focus is the physicians and courtiers who enjoyed the closest intimacy with the monarchs and, in many ways, worked behind the scenes and out of the public's notice. The exception to this was George III's illness of 1788 to 1789, when his physicians and servants appeared in the spotlight. A number of fine studies have examined the household servants and medical courtiers at the English court through the reign of Queen Anne, but none have reached to the latter part of the eighteenth century, nor focused on the individuals with intimate access to George III during the Regency Crisis.<sup>65</sup> By studying their actions and how they chose to use their knowledge of the

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<sup>64</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons*, 237; Marilyn Morris, *The British Monarchy and the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 191-2. David Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarch and the 'Invention of Tradition,' c. 1820-1977," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 101-164.

<sup>65</sup> R.O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Elizabeth Furdell, *James Welwood: Physician to the Glorious Revolution* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998); Elizabeth Furdell, *The Royal Doctors, 1485-1714: Medical Personnel at the Tudor and Stuarts Courts* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001); Margaret Pelling, "Politics, Medicine, and Masculinity: Physicians and Office-Bearing in Early Modern England," in *The Practice of Reform in Health, Medicine, and Science, 1500-2000: Essays for Charles Webster*, ed., Margaret Pelling and Scott Mandelbrote (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 81-105; Margaret Pelling, "Public and Private Dilemmas: The College of Physicians in Early Modern London," in *Medicine, Health and the*

monarch's health in its political context, it is possible to see one manifestation of the ascendancy of Parliament and the decline of the sovereign's prerogative. In large part, this examination shows the increasing power of party over loyalty to the sovereign or the personal motivations of individuals, especially in an age when the ethical grounding of the medical profession was constantly shifting.<sup>66</sup> Anne's closest physicians undertook a policy of misinformation to keep political opponents, who remained limited in exploiting her poor health in the public sphere, unaware of the true state of the queen's ailments. By the reign of George II, the opposition used manufactured reports about his health as political weapons. These events caused the Attorney General to consider the prosecution of the publishers responsible for the untrue accounts. When George III's illness occurred in 1788, the ministry felt comfortable in allowing the king's physicians to be examined before Parliament and supported the publication of their testimony, even though the queen and some members of society opposed these measures. Such actions were outside

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*Public Sphere in Britain, 1600-2000*, ed. Steve Sturdy (London: Routledge, 2002), 27-42; Margaret Pelling, "Scenes from Professional Life: Medicine, Moral Conduct, and Interconnectedness in Middlemarch," in *Politics and Culture in Victorian Britain: Essays in Memory of Colin Matthew*, ed. Peter Ghosh and Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 220-236; Barry Hoffbrand, "Sir William Knighton Bt MD GCH LRCP (1776-1836): Courtier and Confidante-Testimony to Physicianly Virtues?," *Journal of Medical Biography* 18 (2010): 2-9; W.F. Bynum and Roy Porter, *William Hunter and the Eighteenth-Century Medical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>66</sup> W.F. Bynum, *Science and the Practice of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*; Roy Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society in England, 1550-1860*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Andrew Wear, Johanna Geyer-Kordesch, and Roger French, eds., *Doctors and Ethics: The Earlier Historical Setting of Professional Ethics* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1993); Robert Baker, Dorothy Porter, and Roy Porters, eds., *The Codification of Medical Morality in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993); Chester Burns, ed., *Legacies in Ethics and Medicine* (New York: Science History Publications, 1977); Robert Baker and Laurence McCullough, eds., *The Cambridge World History of Medical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1966); Furdell, *Publishing and Medicine in Early Modern England*; Elizabeth Furdell, *Textual Healing: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Medicine* (New York: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005); W. F. Bynum, "Medicine at the English Court, 1688-1837," in *Medicine at the Courts of Europe 1500-1837*, ed. Vivian Nutton (London: Routledge, 1990), 262-289.

the scope of parliamentary authority in earlier reigns, as there was no singular definition of what powers had been lost by the crown and given over to the representatives of the people. By 1788, MPs had a firmer grip on what actions were within their power. Through the demystification of the monarch, recognition of Parliament's authority became clear.

### **Sources and Methodology**

The chapters of this dissertation trace reports of the monarchs' health during successive reigns, from simple colds to ailments that lasted for months. It considers the political implications of these illnesses and assesses how reports were impacted by foreign wars and threats of domestic invasion. This dissertation explores how health became a political tool used by members of the opposition and how the bodily constitution of the reigning monarch was exploited by the prodigal Prince of Wales during the reigns of the Hanoverians. Additionally, this work examines the reactions to these news reports, where available, and shows the concern with the health of the monarch throughout this period of time, while revealing a great deal of frustration by people in Parliament, the streets, and at court with the half truths and double speak employed to conceal the subject.

The most important sources for this dissertation are the newspapers in the Burney Collection, digitized by the British Library.<sup>67</sup> Although the Burney Collection spans the duration of the long eighteenth century, there are gaps and limitations in its holdings. Its main focus is London newspapers, although productions of the provincial press are

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<sup>67</sup> I retain the original formatting and spelling of the newspaper reports as I view the use of capitalization and italics as an important part of reader reception.

included. This body of material is supplemented in the dissertation by poems, pamphlets, magazines, sermons, petitions and addresses to the monarch and MPs, physicians' reports, private diaries, personal correspondence, government transactions, and satirical prints. Although some scholars, including Michael Harris and Arthur Aspinall, have argued that there was considerable government influence over the content of the newspapers during the eighteenth century, this appears to have been exaggerated and recent studies suggest that the sale of advertisements was a greater incentive for publishers to print what was popular, rather than what the ministry or opposition wanted.<sup>68</sup> Although the evidence is incomplete and the sample size is small, the extant financial records of some eighteenth-century newspapers suggest that revenue derived from selling advertising space was, at most, responsible for ~37% of a periodical's annual profits, with government subsidies contributing ~9%, and sales making up the remaining ~53%.<sup>69</sup> The overall freedom of the eighteenth-century press remains a central tenet of this study.

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<sup>68</sup> Black, *English Press in the Eighteenth Century*, 149-151. Hannah Barker, *Newspapers Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England*, 48-50.

<sup>69</sup> For the difficulties associated with figuring out this type of percentage breakdown, see Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole*, 54-64. The percentages listed above are the product of extrapolating yearly revenue from *Gazetteer* sales between October 1783 and December 1785. The percentage of Treasury subsidy is based on the average amount distributed to newspapers (£100) during 1784. While there is no proof that a similar amount was distributed on a monthly basis, although Arthur Aspinall suggests this possibility, in attempting to show the largest possible contribution, I assumed £100 was distributed every month throughout the year, and it still only comes out to 9% of the annual revenue. With newspaper and advertising sales contributing ~90% of the revenue, it seems unlikely that publishers/editors would let themselves be controlled by the paltry Treasury subsidies. For more on the case of the *Gazetteer*, see Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England*, 48-52. For more on Treasury subsidies, see Werkmeister, *The London Daily Press*, 104-105. For advertising versus sales totals for other newspapers, including the *London Gazette* in 1706 and 1707, see R.B. Walker, "Advertising in London Newspapers, 1650-1750," *Business History* 15, no. 2 (1973): 130.

Additionally, the newspapers provide an opportunity to see what stories attracted the attention of the reading public by looking at the letters to the publisher. This dissertation examines what was printed in the press about the monarch's health, but also how people responded to these reports. In many cases, the responses express the desire for more information and frustration at the incomplete nature of the accounts. Although it is impossible, in many situations, to know if these letters were genuine or not, the fact that letters of a similar vein appeared frequently in both ministry and opposition papers seems to suggest that they were really a reflection of popular opinion and less of political fabrication.

Methodologically, this dissertation employs a traditional close reading of the sources. Additionally, reader reception is important in contextualizing the reports appearing in the newspapers. In particular, it draws on the concept laid out by Ann Dean in *The Talk of the Town: Figurative Publics in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Dean finds that the prevalence of drawing rooms and similar meetings during this period informed the way that newspapers and other accounts were written. Rather than showing the "public moving from the court to the town," Dean observes that the newspapers "depict the public moving to the periphery of the court, where readers were invited to participate at a distance in politics as practiced by the king and his courtiers. Newspapers created an image of their readers eavesdropping at the palace...."<sup>70</sup> This approach to readership

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<sup>70</sup> Ann C. Dean, *The Talk of the Town: Figurative Publics in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 46. For other discussions of reader reception see Geoff Baker and Ann McGruer, eds., *Readers, Audiences and Coteries in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006); Ann C. Dean, "Insinuation and Instruction: Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century 'Letters to the Printer,'" in *Print and Power in France and England, 1500-1800*, ed. David Adams and Adrian Armstrong (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 85-98; Joad Raymond, ed., *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London: Frank Cass Publishers,

dovetails perfectly with this study, as this dissertation's focus is on the individuals at the center of the court. By doing a close reading of the types of sources listed above, a clear tension in society is visible as the mystification of the monarchy was pulled apart by the struggle of public versus private and changing beliefs about what the public had a right to know. Lastly, prosopography helps discover how the household servants and physicians contributed to the public versus private struggle and how they personally responded to the political context of the monarch's health.

### **Organization**

Chapters two, three, and four of this dissertation proceed in a roughly chronological fashion from 1688 to 1789 and examine the health reportage on the monarchs in various states of wellness and illness. The chapters sketch an image of what was publicly known about their health in periods of severe infirmity and simple colds; during the death of consorts and birth of children; and even through the realities of old age. Chapter two focuses on William III (r. 1689-1702), Mary II (r. 1689-1694), and Queen Anne (r. 1702-1714) as a group. Despite the aspersions made against William as a foreigner and usurper, he maintained a certain level of mystification about his health and body, although to a significantly smaller degree than that enjoyed by Anne. The sacred veil of kingship, which William's supporters worked to maintain during his reign, persisted through the Stuarts and helped stem some efforts to demystify monarchy, although the tension was increased due to the poor health of both William and Anne.

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1999); Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, eds., *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); J.A. Downie and Thomas N. Corns, eds., *Telling People What to Think: Early Eighteenth-Century Periodicals from The Review to The Rambler* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1993).

Chapter three traces the health history of the first two Hanoverians through the same types of situations as examined for the Stuarts in chapter two. Emphasis is placed on the adoption and encouragement of Enlightenment principles, especially in relation to medicine and the body, under George I (r. 1714-1727) and George II (r. 1727-1760). A major difference between the two dynasties was the presence under the Hanoverians of a large royal family, expanding the area of popular interest to the health of consorts, mistresses, and heirs to the throne.

Chapter four focuses on the Regency Crisis of 1788 to 1789. It also charts the earlier periods of sickness experienced by George III (r. 1760-1820) and shows how the rise of celebrity culture, coupled with the domestic nature of kingship, made the monarch's health and body a central point of public interest. The chapter goes on to explore the manifestation of this interest through the examination of the king's physicians by parliamentary committees and the apparent public belief that English citizens had a right to know the whole story. These realities, coupled with the increasingly blurred division of public and private, completed the long process of demystification begun a century before.

Since the health of George III during the Regency Crisis is a central part of chapter four, it deserves its own overview here. Between the middle of October 1788 and the end of February 1789, the health complaints of the king were numerous. Although the debate today focuses on the underlying cause of the illness, the symptoms displayed by George III are relatively straightforward. The earliest complaints on October 17 were stomach and gastrointestinal, which his doctors attributed to gout. The king also had



cramping in his legs which Sir George Baker, his primary physician, believed to be the result of the monarch wearing wet socks for too long, although this complaint escalated quickly and included swollen feet that ultimately resulted in the king being unable to walk for a period of time. Signs of the mental incapacity that afflicted the king from November 1788 to February 1789 appeared on October 20 when George III could not concentrate enough to respond to letters from his prime minister, William Pitt the Younger, and the following day the sovereign showed signs of a “lurking disorder in his constitution.”<sup>71</sup> By the end of October, this lurking disorder manifested itself in difficulty sleeping, memory loss, violent outbursts, and a “great hurry of spirits, and incessant loquaciousness” which made those around him uneasy.<sup>72</sup>

At the start of November, with the king’s health deteriorating rapidly, Sir George Baker called in other physicians to treat the fever, rapid pulse, and greater loss of mental control experienced by George III. As the month progressed, the monarch displayed periods of uncontrollable behavior, improper comments, and excessive rambling, all of which led Sir George to write to William Pitt on November 22 that the king was “entirely deranged.”<sup>73</sup> Soon delusions crept into the king’s mind which included that London had flooded and that he could see Hanover through the 40 foot telescope he had paid for William Herschel to build.<sup>74</sup> The combination of delusions, excitability, and violence led

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<sup>71</sup> Richard Plantagent Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Greville, *Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George the Third From Original Family Documents* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853), 1:429.

<sup>72</sup> Sir George Baker, October 27, 1788, “Diary and Letters on George III-1788,” Royal College of Physicians, London, MS 92, f. 17 (hereafter cited as Baker Diary).

<sup>73</sup> J. Holland Rose, *William Pitt and National Revival* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1911), 411.

George III's physicians to occasionally place the king in a strait waistcoat to control his behavior. The situation remained much the same, some days better and some worse, until early February 1789 when the king started to show clear signs of improved mental capabilities and control of himself before the physicians declared him fully recovered at the start of March 1789.

After the in-depth discussion of the social and political ramifications associated with George III's illness in 1788 and 1789 in chapter four, chapter five is, in part, a prosopographical study of the mostly unknown household servants and courtiers who tended the monarchs discussed in the first three chapters and were involved in the irregular process of demystification. I judge the actions of these individuals by the oath they swore as courtiers and, for the physicians, the rudimentary medical ethics which developed before nineteenth-century professionalization. The chapter goes on to show that these individuals, too often overlooked by historians, had considerable power, both in terms of controlling access to the monarch and deciding what was to be done with the privileged medical knowledge in their possession. Taken together, these four chapters show the behind-the-scenes truth of the monarch's natural body, what made its way into the public sphere, and how, by tracing these two concepts, one can see the gradual demystification of the English monarchy from Revolution to Revolution.

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<sup>74</sup> Robert Fulke Greville, *The Diaries of Colonel The Hon. Robert Fulke Greville, Equerry to His Majesty King George III*, ed. F. McKno Bladon (London: John Lane, 1930), 96.

## CHAPTER TWO

### KING BILLY AND BRANDY NAN: THE UNHEALTHY END OF THE STUARTS

So that 'tis plain there is *Satyr in Death it self*, and that makes me assert that *Her Majesty's Body is as mortal as other Lady's*, for 'tis subject to *Three Hundred Diseases*; (for so many are incident to the Bodies of Women) and I hear the GOUT has been so bold already, as to lay Siege to her Royal Person; or did she enjoy a PERPETUAL HEALTH, (which I never knew in a *King or Queen*) yet Age at length wou'd SNOW on her Head, and even WITHER Her into the Grave.<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation comes from John Dunton's 1708 panegyric on Queen Anne, *A Cat May Look on a Queen*. His reference to her health was appropriate since, much like her predecessor King William III, she suffered from bodily ailments throughout her reign. Anne was the last Stuart to sit on the English throne and she had the opportunity due to the actions of her brother-in-law William when he invaded England in what historians calls the Glorious Revolution or the Revolution of 1688. When authors like Thomas Babington Macaulay and G.M. Trevelyan began writing their Whig histories, they cast the events of 1688 as the starting point for modern society.<sup>2</sup> While Parliament has met uninterrupted since then, there was not an instantaneous break from a past where ideas of sacred and mysterious kingship were upheld and the monarch had significant powers. This chapter explores these holdover ideas for the final three Stuart monarchs

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<sup>1</sup> John Dunton, *A Cat May Look on a Queen: Or, A Satyr on Her Present Majesty*, 2nd ed. (London: John Morphem, 1708), 25-6.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1848) and G.M. Trevelyan, *The English Revolution 1688-1689* (1938; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

from 1688 to 1714. In particular, it establishes a baseline of what discussions of the monarch's health and body were acceptable in the burgeoning newspapers during times of political, social, and military importance. Additionally, the chapter shows that gender did not significantly hinder press coverage of the monarch's health, although concerns of prosecution for libel, slander, and treason did limit what was written.

As Tony Claydon has shown, William developed a new type of propaganda that appealed to a large audience after the Revolution because there was now "...a mass electorate, who could never directly witness [the] royalty, [that] wielded more power."<sup>3</sup> With regular people playing a larger role in government, it was imperative that the new king connect with them in ways they would both understand and respect. Benjamin Klein has examined how the press reported on public ceremonies during the later Stuarts and the efforts made by the crown to shape how such events were depicted in the public sphere.<sup>4</sup> Underlying these ceremonies was the notion of divine right monarchy, but the concept had been radically altered by the Civil Wars and the Glorious Revolution. Gerald Straka has explored how this theory of kingship was supported and challenged during William's reign.<sup>5</sup> However, his article examines almost exclusively pamphlet literature, while neglecting other components of print culture. Looking at the newspapers appearing in the public sphere during William and Anne's reigns, while using reportage of their health and bodies as the lens, helps fill in this gap.

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<sup>3</sup> Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Fidel Klein, "'The Splendor of this Solemnity': Royal Ceremony and Celebration in late Stuart England" (PhD diss., Brown University, 2002), 164.

<sup>5</sup> Gerald M. Straka, "The Final Phase of Divine Right Theory in England 1688-1702," *English Historical Review* 77 (1962): 638-658.

### The Nature and Extent of Early Newspapers

Under Charles II and James II, pamphlets were the main form of print culture. There were also many newsletters written to inform courtiers and government officials of the latest news. The situation changed around 1688 and continued to develop during William's reign as published newspapers slowly began to carve out a niche in the public sphere. Up until 1695, the Licensing Act meant that any works published in England had to be first submitted to a government official for approval. This meant that the Licensor of the Press controlled what published material was available for the reading public. Although there were individuals who did not adhere to the stipulations of the Licensing Act, they were a minority, and most writers and publishers were kept in line by the threat of fines and imprisonment for publishing something considered libelous, seditious, or treasonable. All of this meant that, up until 1695, there was really only one newspaper, the *London Gazette*, published by authority, which appeared twice a week before the Revolution but quickly became a tri-weekly.<sup>6</sup> It gathered stories from the secretaries of state and was the official mouthpiece of government policy.

During the Revolution of 1688, for a short while, the licensing structure was lessened by the political chaos at the top of society. As a result, between December 1688 and March 1689, at least eight new newspapers appeared in the public sphere.<sup>7</sup> With names such as the *Orange Gazette* (Pro-William), it was sometimes easy to identify the party loyalty of the papers, but others including the *English Currant*, the *London Mercury* or *Moderate Intelligencer*, the *Universal Intelligence*, and the *Athenian Gazette* or

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<sup>6</sup> *London Gazette*, November 15-17, 1688, Issue 2400.

<sup>7</sup> Klein, 172.

*Caustical Mercury* were not as transparent with their loyalties. For the most part though, none of these newspapers survived beyond a few years. Beginning in 1695, three publications joined the *London Gazette* and retained a sizeable portion of the newspaper market into the eighteenth century. There was the Tory affiliated *Post Boy*, the Whig *Flying Post*, and the relatively neutral, although slightly Whig-leaning *Post Man and Historical Account*.<sup>8</sup> All three were tri-weeklies. Newspapers at this time were considered dry, more concerned with foreign than domestic information, and did not contain many editorials. This changed during the middle of William's reign and continued throughout Anne's reign as newspapers displaced pamphlets as the "main vehicle of political controversy."<sup>9</sup>

What helped bring about this change was the frequency of newspaper publications. Beginning in 1702, the daily-published, Whig-leaning *The Daily Courant* first appeared. The year 1706 brought the first evening paper, the *Evening Post*. Queen Anne's reign also saw the flooding of the public sphere with more political pamphlets and periodical essays than had been seen since the Civil Wars of the mid-seventeenth century. Some of the most famous, or infamous, periodical essays were the Tory supporting *Review* and *Examiner*, and the Whig supporting *Spectator*, *Tatler*, *Englishman* and *Patriot*.<sup>10</sup> Although unavailable from William's tenure, reliable circulation totals

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<sup>8</sup> J.A. Downie, *Robert Harley and the Press: Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Age of Swift and Defoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 7.

<sup>9</sup> R.B. Walker, "The Newspaper Press in the Reign of William III," *The Historical Journal* 17, no. 14 (December 1974): 701 Also see John Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne Taken From Original Sources* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1919), 301-2.

<sup>10</sup> According to a contemporary account, the newspapers were considered in the following fashion: "The *Observer* is best to towel the Jacks, the *Review* is best to promote peace, the *Flying Post* is best for

exist for the newspapers published during Anne's reign. The *Spectator* had a circulation total of around 1,700 a day, while the *Review* only distributed 450 copies of an issue.<sup>11</sup> The *Flying Post* had a circulation of 1,650 per issue, in 1712, a significant increase from its total of 800 in 1704. As for the *Post Boy*, it had a circulation of around 3,000 copies per issues, slightly lower than the *Post Man*'s figure of 3,800.<sup>12</sup> None of these papers could compare to the circulation total of the official *London Gazette*, which averaged between 7,000 and 8,000 copies per issue.<sup>13</sup> By 1712, there were estimated to be upwards of 78,000 newspapers sold per week in the capital.<sup>14</sup> These figures reflect only the total number of newspapers sold, not the extent of the readership audience. Contemporary estimates, especially for newspapers like the *Tatler* or *Spectator*, which were popular subscriptions for coffeehouses to purchase, assert that each copy was read by twenty people.<sup>15</sup> Although some newspapers were forced to cease publication, overall distribution totals increased after the Stamp Act of 1712. This legislation, which taxed a half penny for a half sheet of paper, a penny for a full sheet, and a shilling per advertisement, impacted the selection of newspapers available, but most of those

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the Scotch news, the *Postboy* is best for the English and Spanish news, the *Daily Courant* is the best critic, the *English Post*, is the best collector, the *London Gazette* has the best authority, and the *Postman* is the best for everything." Quotation from Alexander Andrews, *The History of British Journalism from the Foundation of the Newspaper Press in England, to the Repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855 with Sketches of Press Celebrities* (1859; repr., New York: Haskell House of Publishers Ltd, 1968), 1:102.

<sup>11</sup> Henry L. Snyder, "The Circulation of Newspapers in the Reign of Queen Anne," *The Library* 23 (1968): 209.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-11.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>14</sup> Downie, 10. Newspapers from London are the focus of this dissertation, as provincial newspapers frequently took most of their material straight from the London press.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

mentioned above survived. In fact, the Act was so imperfectly worded that it actually helped increase the physical size of newspapers, as publishers began to use one and a half sheets of paper, rather than only a half sheet or a single sheet, thus avoiding the stamp tax.<sup>16</sup>

### **William III's Health in the Newspapers**

The increasing scale and scope of the public sphere in the latter seventeenth century was visible to many people, including the man who would eventually sit on the throne of England as King William III. In order to obtain this goal, he had to convince the English people that under him, there would be a stable, Protestant presence to guide the state. To fulfill this objective, William had tracts published which explained why he was intervening in the affairs of the nation. This was not the last time that the citizens of England were reliant on the printed word to learn about the motives and actions of the soon-to-be William III.<sup>17</sup>

From the time that William landed in England on November 5, 1688 he was certain that the printed word would be important, which explains why one of the first things he did in Exeter was set up a printing press. However, other issues were less certain, including how his outnumbered troops would fare against James II, and the Prince of Orange's health. At 38, William was still in the prime of his life, based on the standards of the time, although his physical health raised concerns. He came from a

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew Kilburn, "Royalty and Public in Britain: 1714-1789" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1997), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* and Tony Claydon, *William III* (New York: Longman, 2002).



family that was “given to mysterious fevers” that could erupt without notice.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, both of his parents experienced poor health and died relatively young. Early in William’s life he contracted one of the family’s mysterious fevers and was diagnosed with smallpox in March 1675. Although he survived, his “health was permanently impaired.”<sup>19</sup> On top of these fevers, William had a hunched back, a crooked nose which complimented his weak lungs, and a cough that accompanied his bad asthma.<sup>20</sup> As one ambassador described him in 1692, William was “of medium height, very much stooped, always oppressed with a looseness of the chest, and of such a weak constitution that his life only seems to hang by a thread....”<sup>21</sup> This was hardly the ideal specimen of health for two nations to hang their hopes on in the war against Catholicism and France. Yet, despite all of his physical limitations, William’s military and tactical abilities helped the English, Dutch, and their allies overcome the dangerous designs of Louis XIV.

Health was a topic of great interest during the long eighteenth century as medical knowledge and skill remained ineffective at preventing and curing many ailments. Such concern is visible in the many private correspondence of the day, so it should not be surprising that this same interest and concern applied to nobles and public officials. An example of this situation occurred during the middle of December 1688. Even in the midst of all the confusion surrounding William’s entry into the city, and James II’s final exodus from London, the newspapers, both those published by authority and those not,

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<sup>18</sup> Stephen Baxter, *William III* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1966), 36.

<sup>19</sup> John Van der Kiste, *William and Mary* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 2003), 27.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>21</sup> Henri and Barbara Van der Zee, *William and Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 353.

took the time to mention the Lord Mayor “being indisposed” and the Archbishop of Canterbury “being ill.”<sup>22</sup> Although these reports lacked specific details about the indispositions of the two men, the very mentioning of their ill health in the limited space available in the newspapers shows that this was important information, not only because those listed were key figures in the upcoming transition of power, but also because society was interested.

One important person whose health was not mentioned in the papers at this time was William. Between December 19 and 21, 1688, William’s actions were reported, including his entry into St. James’s, a public meal he had with some of the nobility, and his meeting with his recently arrived sister-in-law and her husband, the Princess and Prince of Denmark, the future Queen Anne and her husband George.<sup>23</sup> In the story on the arrival of the prince and princess, it was observed that they had “returned in perfect Health.”<sup>24</sup> The same was not true for William. As 1689 dawned, the king suffered from a number of ailments, which his subjects never had a chance to read about. Possibly because he wanted to portray an image of himself without physical weakness, or because newspapers were still operating under the auspices of the Licensing Act, no reference to his faltering health appeared in the newspapers. When his wife, Mary, arrived in February 1689, she was troubled by how much weight William had lost during his illness and his

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<sup>22</sup> *London Mercury or Moderate Intelligencer*, Saturday, December 15, 1688, Issue 1; *English Currant*, December 21-26, 1688, Issue 5; *London Mercury or Moderate Intelligencer*, December 22-24, 1688, Issue 4.

<sup>23</sup> *English Currant*, December 19-21, 1688, Issue 4; *London Gazette*, December 20-24, 1688, Issue 2412. No reference was made to Anne’s then-current pregnancy.

<sup>24</sup> *London Gazette*, December 20-24, 1688, Issue 2412.

constant cough.<sup>25</sup> Soot-filled London and the smoky council chambers in which he found himself during this time did not help his chronic asthma and might explain why he seemed so serious and somber when people such as John Evelyn and Lady Cavendish had the chance to meet him.<sup>26</sup>

Over the coming weeks, leading up to the coronation on April 11, the future king's health continued to deteriorate without it becoming widely known. Even with a move to Hampton Court at the end of February, the situation looked grim. William continued to cough blood and he confided to a friend in early April that he thought he might die.<sup>27</sup> His doctors also thought that the king did not have long to live.<sup>28</sup> Although he recovered his health enough to be able to participate in the coronation ceremony, his ailments caused him to lose concentration and he failed to provide an appropriate response at one point during the service, resulting in an awkward silence.<sup>29</sup> John Evelyn did not mention this irregularity in his diary, nor was it included in the official account provided in the *London Gazette*, which described the ceremony in great detail, including the attire of the joint monarchs.<sup>30</sup> The silence was undoubtedly noted through word of mouth and rumor, but to see notice of it printed would have been highly objectionable to

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<sup>25</sup> R. Doebner, ed., *Memoirs of Mary, Queen of England, Together with Her Letters and Those of Kings James II and William III to the Electress, Sophia of Hanover* (Leipzig: Veit & Comp., 1886), 10.

<sup>26</sup> John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E.S. de Beer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 4:625; Elizabeth Hamilton, *William's Mary: A Biography of Mary II* (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1972), 208.

<sup>27</sup> Baxter, 248.

<sup>28</sup> Hamilton, 213.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>30</sup> *London Gazette*, April 11-15, 1689, Issue 2444.

many people. The Jacobite author Ralph Gray suggested in his “treasonable and seditious paper,” *The Coronation Ballad*, that William suffered from gastric distress during the coronation ceremony.<sup>31</sup> Whether or not Gray’s caustic poem was accurate, in the early part of the reign, William’s health was disconcerting but viewed more as a bother than a life-threatening condition. Those at court who had to interact with William found the king’s health a nuisance, as reflected by Mary’s diary entry that stated, “The misfortune of the kings [*sic*] health which hindered him living at White Hall, put people out of humour....”<sup>32</sup>

In the eyes of most citizens, the king’s residence was of little importance. Most of William III’s subjects had no opportunity to meet him, whether at Whitehall or Kensington. Their interactions with the sovereigns would be through other means, mostly reading about William and Mary, or perhaps purchasing an image of the king and queen. This group of people also enjoyed the expansion of the newspaper press, although its coverage of the king and queen was vague.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, there was still much a reader of the newspapers could learn about the ill health of foreign royals, including accounts of the abdicated James II’s problem of bloody noses.<sup>34</sup> As for the new king, he was

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<sup>31</sup> Ralph Gray, “The Coronation Ballad”, in *Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660-1714*, ed. George deForest Lord (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 5:44. Three stanzas provide the gist of Gray’s claims: “One lucky presage on Coronation day/ Fell out in the midst of his ‘nointing they say;/ The heroic Hogen himself did bewray./ A dainty, &c./ Queen Moll and her sister Nancy so bright,/ As soon as they smelt out his laxative plight,/ Though he nodded and frowned yet they giggled outright./ A dainty, &c./ Therefore mark it well ye rabble rout,/ At crowning the Orange the juice flew out./ They that like not the smell, let them hold their snout./ A dainty, &c.”

<sup>32</sup> Doebner, 15.

<sup>33</sup> *London Gazette*, February 21-25, 1689, Issue 2430.

infrequently in London. Almost always engaged in combat to secure his new throne, William III was often in danger. One such instance when his life was threatened occurred at the Battle of the Boyne in July 1690, when “...one of the Balls passed so close to His Majesty, that it took away a piece of his Coat, Waistcoat, and Shirt, raised the Skin on the blade of his right Shoulder, and drew a little Blood, but a Plaister being put on, His majesty continued on Horseback without the least concern....”<sup>35</sup> Rather than comment on the king’s close call, Evelyn took note of the victorious battle, writing of “greate expectations from thence.”<sup>36</sup> Such accounts helped spread the image of a brave and martial man, which was the ideal that William and the Whigs wanted to convey to his new people. In the eyes of some of his Protestant Irish subjects, the King had exceeded expectations by stopping the joint armies of James II and Louis XIV. The address of the Protestant Nobility, Gentry, and Clergy of Ireland living in London in response to William’s victory at the Battle of the Boyne referred to the “Sacred Persons” of the joint monarchs and praised “divine Majesty” for preserving the king’s life.<sup>37</sup> The type of language used in this and other addresses is important in that it refers to the king and

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<sup>34</sup> *London Intelligence*, January 15-19, 1689, Issue 2; *Orange Gazette*, March 5-9, 1689; *London Gazette*, March 7-11, 1689, Issue 2434; *London Gazette*, February 9-12, 1691, Issue 2635; *London Gazette*, February 12-16, 1691, Issue 2636.

<sup>35</sup> *London Gazette*, July 3, 1690, Issue 2572. This was such a close call that in France, images were produced reflecting the English King William III’s death on the battlefield and his subsequent funeral. See: Michael Wynn Jones, *A Cartoon History of the Monarchy* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 28-9.

<sup>36</sup> Evelyn, 5:27-8.

<sup>37</sup> *London Gazette*, December 28-31, 1691, Issue 2727. While this is a long time after the Battle of the Boyne, the sentiment from the Protestants of Ireland is clearly in reference to the king’s actions in 1690, since he had not returned to fight any battles there between July 1690 and when this address was delivered at the end of 1691.

queen as divine and sacred, which illustrates how they were commonly discussed in the public sphere.

The address in 1691 was not an isolated occurrence of the use of the word sacred to describe the monarchs. This was the type of response to the godly propaganda that Tony Claydon has argued helped keep the new monarchs in power. A newspaper editor writing in February 1692 noted that, in England, “...both Parliament and People, no less Affectionately concur in fervent wishes, that wish [*sic*] his Majesty may be providently sparing of a Sacred Person, which he owes to the Welfare of three Nations, that next under the Protection of Heaven, wholly depend upon his Preservation.”<sup>38</sup> For someone so closely associated with divine protection, William III’s health had the potential to show his lack of divinity, especially since he was again under the weather in the winter of 1691 to 1692. While his life did not seem to be in jeopardy, observers felt that he looked worse than when he arrived in November three years earlier. He was spitting blood and the cold weather had already claimed a larger than usual number of lives.<sup>39</sup> When the king sailed for Flanders at the start of March 1692, where he would suffer painful headaches, he left behind his wife to take care of the kingdoms. Mary II was happy to defer to her husband in political matters, but handled herself ably while he was away with the guidance of a council of nine, as had been laid out in the Regency Bill, which included the Lord Chamberlain, the Lord President, the Secretary of State, and the First Commissioner of the Treasury.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Present State of Europe or the Historical and Political Mercury*, February 1, 1692.

<sup>39</sup> Van der Zee, 353; Baxter, 307-8; Hamilton, 292; Doebner, 46.

### The Health of the Queen

Although the council of important Lords held most of the power and resolved problems while William was on the continent, there was one thing they could not help Mary with – her health. According to the queen’s diary: “For about the first weeck in Aprill [*sic*] I was very ill of a cold, which made me keep my chamber severall [*sic*] days with an inward feaver & very great weackness. It was the first time in 12 year I had missed going to Church on the Lords day, and God is my witness that was my greatest trouble.”<sup>41</sup> For someone as religious as Mary, her failure to attend divine services, especially around Easter, should have attracted attention. The incident was serious enough that in the eyes of the Archbishop of Canterbury, “It would do anyone good, to see with what a grace and cheerfulness she plays off so great an illness.”<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, her absence from divine services, and indisposition, went without comment in the newspapers. The coverage of the queen’s illness was as underwhelming as coverage of William’s ailments in the early years of their reign. In all likelihood a combination of sacral beliefs and the Licensing Act brought about this delicacy. It is clear, however, that newspapers, newsletters, and private correspondence deemed the activities of the queen worthy of inclusion. Such coverage included Mary’s attendance in 1690 at a playhouse to see John Dryden’s *The Spanish Friar*, her visit to ‘The Folly’ entertainment barge on the

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<sup>40</sup> Van der Kiste, 136

<sup>41</sup> Doebner, 48.

<sup>42</sup> Hamilton, 292.

Thames, her meetings with Admiral Russet in April 1692, and when she went to meet the returning William III at the end of October 1692.<sup>43</sup>

For William and Mary, there were few happy reunions like in 1692. Less than three years later William would rule without his beloved, English wife. Mary spent most of the spring months in 1694 dealing with a feverish chill that took its toll. She soldiered on, with the newspapers taking no notice of her declining constitution, until she was reunited with William in November 1694. He had his own cold to deal with that required large amounts of quinine and a change in his diet to the point that it consisted of only apples and milk.<sup>44</sup> John Evelyn was able to note at the end of the month that “K. William had 2 fitts [*sic*] of an Ague.”<sup>45</sup> The diarist’s information must have come from hearing the town’s scuttlebutt, since the newspapers remained silent on the health of both sovereigns, even though these papers reported their attendance at the bonfires and illuminations displayed by their subjects upon William’s safe return. The joint monarchs also received an address from the City before proclaiming a thanksgiving for early in December for “protecting His Majesties Person from the Danger to which he was exposed in his late Expedition beyond the Seas.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *London Gazette*, April 28-May 2, 1692, Issue 2762; H.M.C., *Fourteenth Report, Appendix II*, 505. Also see Ashton, 360, and R.O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 33.

<sup>44</sup> Hamilton, 324-5.

<sup>45</sup> Evelyn, 5:196.

<sup>46</sup> *London Gazette*, November 8-12, 1694, Issue 3026; *London Gazette*, November 12-15, 1694, Issue 3027; *London Gazette*, November 19-22, 1694, Issue 3029.



In December a deadly pestilence made its way through the capital.<sup>47</sup> Smallpox, the disease that William had survived in his youth, now struck his wife. Around December 20, Mary realized that she was ill. However, instead of informing the doctors right away, she spent a few days organizing and burning her private papers before she alerted William to her plight.<sup>48</sup> The next few days were a nightmare for the king who, despite sleeping in his military cot next to the queen's bed, still had to attend to government business. In a daze he went to Parliament on December 22, where the Triennial Bill awaited the royal assent, which he gave, although Bishop Burnet felt that William would have vetoed the legislation had he not been so focused on his wife's health.<sup>49</sup> The king was hardly the only one concerned by Mary's ailment, as court nobles and household servants spread the news of the queen's dire situation. By the simple cycle of publication dates, the most perilous days of her illness fell between issues of the *London Gazette*. When the next one was printed, covering the days December 24-27, 1694, the lead story was already the talk of the town: "THE Queen was taken ill on *Friday* last; and her Distemper proves to be the Small-Pox. Her Majesty has been, and still continues, in a very dangerous condition."<sup>50</sup>

This appearance of the lead story of a newspaper being about the health of an English monarch was a unique event in William and Mary's reign. It is the only instance,

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<sup>47</sup> Hamilton, 326-7.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>49</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Time. From the Restoration of King Charles II, to the Conclusion of the Treaty of Peace at Utrecht, in the Reign of Queen Anne* (London: A. Millar, 1753), 3:188.

<sup>50</sup> *London Gazette*, December 27-31, 1694, Issue 3040.

in fact, until the later part of Queen Anne's reign. The existence of this lead story is surprising, not only because it discusses the monarch's health, but also because at the time "there was no attempt to put the important news at the top of the page."<sup>51</sup> The reasons for this sudden break with the norm are two-fold. First, it was common knowledge how deadly smallpox was, especially that winter. Second, William had ordered special prayers be said for the queen at church services on Christmas Day.<sup>52</sup> The desire for divine intervention trumped any thought of keeping the illness a secret. This was an unusual time, and everyone was hopeful when word spread that her ailment was actually the measles and that Mary might recover.<sup>53</sup> Although not one of the nobles crowded in the queen's ante-chamber waiting for updates, Jenkin Lewis, a servant of the Duke of Gloucester, expressed happiness upon learning from a household servant at Kensington Palace that it was believed that Mary did not actually have smallpox. He recorded in his diary that there was an "abundance of joy to all people; for she was beloved by everybody."<sup>54</sup> Yet, hope quickly faded. On December 27, Dr. John Radcliffe, the preeminent physician in the capital, confirmed that the disease was smallpox and that the queen was beyond hope.<sup>55</sup> This news affected the public, as seen in Bishop Burnet's

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<sup>51</sup> Walker, 702. This was most evident when William III died in 1702. The *English Post* of March 5-7, 1702, Issue 220 did not lead with a story about the death of the king, rather the top report was a foreign report from Grand Cairo in Egypt dated November 21, 1701: "The French Vice-consul at Damiata being lately Cudgelled by a Turk, complained to the French Consul here, and there-upon the Turk was condemned to pay a Fine, which so incens'd the People, that they Plundere'd a French-man's House."

<sup>52</sup> Van der Kiste, 178.

<sup>53</sup> Narcissus Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs From September 1678 to April 1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1857), 3:417.

<sup>54</sup> Jenkin Lewis, *Memoirs of Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, From His Birth, July the 24<sup>th</sup>, 1689, To October, 1697: From an Original Tract* (London: Payne, 1789), 39.

account of the scene: “Never was such a face of universal Sorrow seen in a Court, or in a Town, as at this time: All people, men and women, young and old, could scarce refrain from Tears.”<sup>56</sup> Mary died on December 28, “...leaving His Majesty under an unexpressible Grief and Affliction; and the whole Kingdom under the deepest and most sensible Sorrow for the loss of a Princess of so much Piety, Clemency, Goodness, and other great and exemplary virtues.”<sup>57</sup> William was now a foreign-born king ruling alone.

William’s inexpressible grief and affliction soon became popular topics of conversation. The monarch who many had regarded as cold and distant, suddenly had so much emotion that his life was threatened. This danger was ascertained by those who personally interacted with the king and also spread through private correspondence. Two examples come from the diplomat Matthew Prior. In one letter from The Hague, Prior notes “we are all abundantly convinced that we have lost the best of Princesses, and are in the greatest apprehensions for his health who only could deserve her. The sole consolation we give ourselves is that we have such men as His Grace of Shrewsbury to comfort our afflicted King.”<sup>58</sup> To James Vernon, Under-Secretary of State, Prior was more succinct: “What have we to say but our prayers for the preservation of the King’s

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<sup>55</sup> Van der Kiste, 179.

<sup>56</sup> Burnet, 3:189. Private correspondence also reflected the depression felt by those who learned of the queen’s illness. For one example see: H.M.C *Fourteenth Report, Appendix II*, 561: Robert Harley to Sir Edward Harley, December 27, 1694.

<sup>57</sup> *London Gazette*, December 27-31, 1694, Issue 3040. Such unalloyed grief was acceptable since in this unusual situation a sovereign had died but there was no ascension of a new sovereign who required everyone’s lauding and supplication.

<sup>58</sup> H.M.C., *Bath MSS*, 3:46.

life?”<sup>59</sup> For those at Kensington on December 28, many witnessed William collapsing and his ever present cough ceasing. While seemingly a positive, in reality this silence raised concern because the king was no longer clearing his lungs to accommodate for his asthma.<sup>60</sup> This physical sign was very problematic because there was a great deal of uncertainty about what would happen if William were to die soon after Mary. The war against France would, in all likelihood, quickly collapse, and there was nothing to say that James II would not lead an invasion to reclaim the throne.<sup>61</sup> On December 31, 1694 both houses of Parliament went to Kensington to pay their condolences to the king. Within their addresses to the sovereign, which were printed in the *London Gazette*, it became clear to a wider audience just how much concern there should be for William’s health. Although the two addresses are quite similar, the one from the Lords is a bit more descriptive and worth repeating here:

WE Your Majesty’s most Dutiful and Loyal Subjects, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament Assembled ... most humbly Beseeching Your Majesty that You would not Indulge Your Grief upon the Sad occasion to the Prejudice of the Health of Your Royal Person, in whose Preservation not only the Welfare of Your Own Subjects, but of all Christendom is so nearly Concerned.<sup>62</sup>

As the calendar turned to 1695, the king remained ill and isolated, refusing to see anyone except his closest friends and neglecting to look at any papers that needed his attention.<sup>63</sup> While his inactivity was not published in the newspapers, still under the

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<sup>59</sup> H.M.C., *Bath MSS*, 3:46.

<sup>60</sup> Van der Kiste, 180-1.

<sup>61</sup> Baxter, 320.

<sup>62</sup> *London Gazette*, December 27-31, 1694, Issue 3040.

power of the Licensing Act until April of this year, those who knew the situation remained concerned about the king's constitution. Addresses poured in from more than just the legislative branch of the government, including one from the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of London, one from the residents of Zeal, and one from the town of Barnestaple. The address from the City echoes similar sentiments to the one from the House of Lords but its language is different. It includes a passage stating, we:

...do Humbly beseech Your Majesty, not to suffer so deep a Resentment on this occasion, as may be dangerous to Your Royal Person, and give further Advantage to Your Majesty's Enemies. And we earnestly implore Almighty GOD, who hath Excited Your Majesty to so glorious a Work, as the Preservation of the Religion and Liberties of Your Majesty's Kingdoms, to preserve and prolong Your Majesty's Health and Sacred Life, for the support thereof.<sup>64</sup>

The address from Zeal also refers to the king's "Sacred Person" while Barnestaple's only states "Royal Person."<sup>65</sup> The continued use of the term 'sacred,' which appears in many addresses, not all related to situations involving bodily health, serves as a reminder of how the king was publicly discussed by his subjects in print. However, the situation began to change after 1695 and reports of William's health began to appear in the newspapers, although such accounts remained vague and incomplete.<sup>66</sup> Despite these new

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<sup>63</sup> Van der Kiste, 184.

<sup>64</sup> *London Gazette*, December 31, 1694-January 3, 1695, Issue 3041.

<sup>65</sup> *London Gazette*, January 21-24, 1695, Issue 3047. Earlier and later examples of this type of language exist in *London Gazette*, August 17-21, 1693, Issue 2898 and *London Gazette*, December 14-17, 1695, Issue 3245. For examples of sermons that refer to the king and queen as sacred during the reign of William III and Mary II, see John Tillotson, *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson....Containing Two Hundred Sermons and Discourses*, 2 vols. (London, 1722).

reports appearing, it was not until the last few years of William's reign that such accounts appeared with any regularity.

In January 1695, William's cough returned, accompanied with the spitting up of blood, which lasted throughout the spring, all while the newspapers remained silent on his condition, aside from an address from the county of Gloucester which noted that they "pray for His Majesty's Health."<sup>67</sup> Toward the end of the year, as the king continued to recover slowly, he undertook a journey from October 19 to November 9, 1695 that allowed his subjects to see a healthier version of their king. The newspapers reporting on the progress commented that the king was "very well" while, at the same time, accounts of sick nobles appeared in print, such as the report in the *Post Man* that "The Lord Viscount *Stair* has been very ill for these two or three days past."<sup>68</sup>

### **Health and Politics After the Licensing Act**

The progress of 1695 is a useful example of what the press discussed in relation to the king's health when he was not under the weather. For William's subjects, it was also a way for them to have a chance to physically see the king, who many knew only from descriptions in private correspondence, pamphlets, newspapers, coins, low quality print images, and the porcelain bowls which became popular during his reign. One has to

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<sup>66</sup> H.M.C., *Fourteenth Report, Appendix II*, 561. This letter is interesting because of a passage it contains in which Guy suggests he is familiar with the medical complaint of the king and offers unsolicited advice that William III should be purged more often and be prescribed a regimen of asses' milk to restore his blood to its proper function.

<sup>67</sup> *London Gazette*, April 8-11, 1695, Issue 3069. For private accounts of William's health during this time see Hamilton, 333 and Luttrell, 3:457.

<sup>68</sup> For disappointment by some inhabitants of the towns along the way of William's progress, see H.M.C., *Fourteenth Report, Appendix II*, 573. For accounts in the newspapers of William's health see *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 26-29, 1695, Issue 74. For an account in the newspapers of another noble's health see *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 22-24, 1695, Issue 72.

assume that from all the joy expressed in the accounts of the progress, those who had been influenced by negative Jacobite tracts saw more positives in William than had originally been thought.<sup>69</sup> However, this sort of open access to the king was not to be had by his subjects once William became more cautious after a reported assassination attempt in February 1696 and his health began to worsen.

These health concerns eventually began to impact William's ability to lead armies and secure peace with France. The first real period of concern occurred when he was on the continent, continuing the war against the French in March and April 1697, even as the ambassadors were working on the Treaty of Ryswick. For some courtiers, that spring was a difficult time for staying healthy as seen by newspaper accounts of the Duke of Shrewsbury's "Spitting of Blood," and Sir Joseph Williamson being "very much Indisposed, which ... [delayed] his going to *Holland*."<sup>70</sup> By far, the most important of these health concerns surrounded Williamson, who was a plenipotentiary to the peace talks and whose presence was needed to help hammer out a European-wide end to the fighting.

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<sup>69</sup> For an example of how happy people were to see the king see *The Royal Progress; or, Aar Diary of the King's Journey from His Majesty's Setting Out from Kensington, till His Return* (London: J. Whitlock, 1695), 17-18. Two passages from the POAS show the Jacobite influence: "He's ugly and crooked,/His nose it is hooked,/The Devil to him is a beauty:/Nor father nor mother,/Nor sister nor brother,/Can ever bring him to his duty." and "A blockish damned Dutch mien, a hawkish beak,/With timorous eyes, who grunts when he should speak./Breathless and faint he moves, or rather stumbles,/Silent and dull he sits and snorts, or grumbles." Source is Lord, ed., *Poems of Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660-1714*, 5:37. One place that these views probably retained their strength was in Oxford, where the king's abrupt departure before dinner did not go over well.

<sup>70</sup> *Post Boy*, March 27-30, 1697, Issue 296; *Post Boy*, March 30-April 1, 1697, Issue 297; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, March 30-April 1, 1697, Issue 299; *Post Boy*, April 3-6, 1697, Issue 299; *Post Boy*, April 6-8, 1697, Issue 300. The *Post Boy*, for the whole of this chapter, provided the largest number of health reports.

Spring 1697 was a crucial period of time for the English nation, and unfortunately, William's health was once again a cause for concern. With the potential for peace on the table, it was important that Louis XIV have no reason to believe that William was so ill that he might die and topple both the war effort and the Revolutionary regime. Indeed, the freedom the press now enjoyed actually worked to the advantage of the government. The newspapers claimed to report on domestic issues without a political bias and stressed that both readers in England and on the continent could rely on the veracity of the printed accounts.<sup>71</sup> William and his ministers knew that Louis, his representatives, and spies were keeping an eye on the English king's health. This type of interest was nothing new, as seen by one newspaper's comment; "When People are *Sick*, it may be, or *otherwise*, in Danger of *Death* ... you know a man may, either as a *Friend*, or a *Divine*, or as a *Philosopher*, have an *Occasion*, or an Authority perhaps, to be a little more *inquisitive* then [*sic*] *Ordinary*...."<sup>72</sup> Rumors of an ailing William appeared in both the *Post Boy* and the *Post Man*, which on March 23, 1697 noted that the king had experienced "some Symptoms of an Ague, upon which he went and refreshed himself for a short time" after which he was perfectly well again.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Klein, 211. Honestly, I find this claim of impartiality to be difficult to believe, but in looking at the newspapers, with the exception of a single instance of a Whig paper stating the king was in perfect health when he clearly was not, there is little to contradict the belief that the papers reported the news honestly at this point of time. Walker, 701 discusses that during the second half of William's reign the newspaper focused more on news than commentary, so this might be true, especially with so much of the focus being on foreign affairs rather than domestic concerns.

<sup>72</sup> *Observer in Dialogue*, July 28, 1682, Issue 381.

<sup>73</sup> *Post Boy*, March 20-23, 1697, Issue 293 and *Post Man and the Historical Account*, March 20-23, 1697, Issue 295.



For all the public was concerned, William simply had a cold, or an ague as so many ailments were labeled, but it was in the past.<sup>74</sup> In reality, those working for the government and towards a peace with France, were uneasy. In a letter from James Vernon to Matthew Prior, on the same date (March 23) as the newspaper reports, it was observed: “We have been apprehensive lest His majesty might have a spice of a quartan ague: the first appearance of it was on Wednesday last, and he had a kind of a fit on Saturday again at Lattens Lodge. I hear he was very well this morning, but whether there hath been any return of it since I don’t know. I hope not.”<sup>75</sup> When William sailed for the Netherlands at the end of April 1697, he remained indisposed, now by dizzy spells, a loss of appetite, and sleeplessness.<sup>76</sup> He also began suffering from a swelling in his legs and feet that bothered him for the rest of his life. And yet, the *Post Man* reported that when he landed on the continent, he was in “good health.”<sup>77</sup> This was political spin at its best.

Upon his arrival at The Hague at the start of May 1697, William found himself overwhelmed and soon collapsed. His health was too precarious at this point to move him, although his faithful friends attempted to conceal just how ill he was. William Blathwayt, the king’s secretary of state while in Flanders, wrote to the secretaries of state in England that the king, “being somewhat out of order by the sudden heats and Crowd of

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<sup>74</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an ague is “an acute or high fever; disease, or a disease, characterized by such fever, esp. when recurring periodically, *spec.* malaria. Also: a malarial paroxysm, or (esp. in later use) the initial stage of such a paroxysm, marked by an intense feeling of cold and shivering.” “ague, n.”. OED Online. June 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/4236?rskey=tT56IS&result=1> (accessed July 28, 2014).

<sup>75</sup> H.M.C., *Bath MSS*, 3:104.

<sup>76</sup> Van der Zee, 418.

<sup>77</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, April 29-May 1, 1697, Issue 313.

Business was pleased to deferr [*sic*] his Journey till this Morning His Majesty has been somewhat feavorish but having been let blood and had other favorable evacuations seems almost perfectly recovered.”<sup>78</sup> Knowing that this was the account penned by Blathwayt, there is little wonder that the reported version of the event in the *London Gazette* of May 3-6, 1697 read “The King was somewhat indisposed yesterday in the evening, and this morning the Physicians thought it necessary His Majesty should be Let Blood, which was done; His Majesty found himself much better afterwards....”<sup>79</sup> As Klein has pointed out, the *London Gazette*’s stories were published based on the reports of the secretaries of state, which kept any damaging bits of information regarding the king’s health from publication.<sup>80</sup> The *London Gazette* also enjoyed the greatest circulation total and, in all likelihood, the greatest readership. As a result, English citizens were subject to the government’s spin of events in many cases. On May 8, the *Post Man* published its own report, noting that William had been let blood but also that “His Phisitians [*sic*] designed to purge him on *Sunday Morning*...,” expanding on the *London Gazette*’s accounts.<sup>81</sup> Despite slightly different levels of coverage, both newspapers agreed that the sovereign was well and recovered. Though the diplomats at Ryswick still worried about William’s health, in reality he did recover, although at a slow rate.<sup>82</sup> The peace treaty was eventually signed in September 1697. Louis XIV must not have found the rumors of

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<sup>78</sup> As quoted in Baxter, 353-4.

<sup>79</sup> *London Gazette*, May 3-6, 1697, Issue 3285.

<sup>80</sup> Klein, 208.

<sup>81</sup> *London Gazette*, May 6-10, 1697, Issue 3286 and *Post Man and the Historical Account*, May 8-11, 1697, Issue 317.

<sup>82</sup> Baxter, 353-4.

William's poor health credible enough to continue the war, otherwise Louis might have delayed signing the treaty. William III returned to England in November, apparently in "good health," but in reality his swollen legs continued to cause him pain, as he was now diagnosed with gout.<sup>83</sup> The newspapers reported in early December that the king was healthy enough to attend the Chapel Royal at Whitehall, watch the fireworks to celebrate a thanksgiving, and go to St. James's, "there being a very fine Ball."<sup>84</sup>

As mentioned earlier, reports of the king's health increased during the second half of his reign. At the same time, leading members of society also continued to have their health reported in the newspapers. However, there were two differences between the types of reports. Firstly, in the case of William, the news articles almost always noted that he was fully recovered of an illness or nearly recovered, as on December 2, 1697, during the same week as the fine ball at St. James's mentioned above, it was reported, "...his Majesty ... God be praised, in perfect Health, came to the Chappel [*sic*] Royal at White Hall..."<sup>85</sup> This was not the case for non-royals. Also in early December 1697, Sir Robert Howard, the Auditor of the Exchequer, was noted as being "dangerously ill" while at the end of May 1700, the newspapers reported that the Secretary of State, the Duke of Shrewsbury, continued indisposed, "being still troubled with Spitting of Blood" while Lord Lonsdale, Lord Privy Seal, was "so very ill, that his Physicians despair [*sic*] of his

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<sup>83</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, November 13-16, 1697, Issue 396. References to William's poor health increased in official correspondence in November 1697. For specifics from November 19, 23, 26, and 28, 1697 see William John Hardy, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series. Of the Reign of William III. 1 January-31 December, 1697*, vol. 8 (1927 repr., Nendeln: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1969), 477, 483, 487, 488.

<sup>84</sup> *Post Boy*, December 2-4, 1697, Issue 403.

<sup>85</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, December 2-4, 1697, Issue 404.

Recovery.”<sup>86</sup> The accounts of their health, although not full of detailed medical information, noted they were still laboring under their ailments, a stark contrast to reports involving the monarch’s health. Another distinction is that when there was any question as to the king’s recovery, the press was very clear that he was still able to conduct business and perform his duties. One such example comes from the *Post Man* of November 25-27, 1697 and reads, “His Majesty has been somewhat indisposed, but God be thanked he has not kept his Bed, but has appeared publickly every day.”<sup>87</sup> Statements like this helped alleviate anxieties that the monarch was unable to conduct the business of state or that he would be unable to continue leading the nation’s armed forces.

Despite an increase in the coverage of the king’s health after 1695, not every episode of poor health received space in the newspapers. For instance, on June 6, 1700, James Vernon wrote to the Duke of Shrewsbury that he had recently seen the king in town who he thought “looks a little pale and weak.”<sup>88</sup> Two days later, Vernon again wrote to Shrewsbury stating, “I may add, that the King is under a load of thoughtfulness, which perhaps may have an ill influence on his health.”<sup>89</sup> During the middle of June, the king himself wrote to his friend Heinsius that “I shall become ill if I have to remain here

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<sup>86</sup> *Post Boy*, May 25-28, 1700, Issue 801.

<sup>87</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, November 25-27, 1697, Issue 401. Hardy, 8:488 in the *Calendar of State Papers* includes a letter from J. Ellis to Lord Ambassador Williamson on November 26, 1697: “The indisposition the King felt on Sunday evening fell into his knee; the physicians pronounce it is a sort of gout; to-day it is quite over.” Also see a letter from James Vernon to Lord Ambassador Williamson of the same date noting “At the beginning of the week the King had a pain in his knee, with a little swelling, which looked like ‘as spice of the gout’; it made him halt for some days, but he is pretty well again.” Ibid., 8:487.

<sup>88</sup> James Vernon, *Letters Illustrative of the Reign of William III. From 1696 to 1708. Addressed to The Duke of Shrewsbury*, ed. G.P.R. James (London: Henry Colburn, 1841), 3:72.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 3:73.

longer.”<sup>90</sup> Also that same month, Dr. John Radcliffe, the physician who a few years before had informed William, upon seeing his swollen ankles, that he would not trade his two good legs for the king’s three kingdoms, spread it around the court that William would be dead within three months.<sup>91</sup> In eighteenth-century England, with its limited understanding of medicine, people were aware that they needed to take rumors of poor health or proclamations of impending death with a grain of salt. The newspapers were full of cases of people being reported ill or dead, only to change their tune in the next issue and state that the individual was actually doing quite well.<sup>92</sup> Even after three of the king’s physicians, including the loud-mouth Dr. Radcliffe, met in late June 1700 to determine a medical remedy for the sovereign’s ailments, the newspapers made no reference to the monarch’s health.<sup>93</sup> This silence may have been the result of the news writers not finding a court physician or courtier willing to share their knowledge of the king’s bodily constitution. Instead, William’s only mention in the newspapers was during various meetings with officials, reviewing troops, or having dinner with members of the

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<sup>90</sup> As quoted in Van der Zee, 457-8.

<sup>91</sup> Chapter five of this dissertation examines the role of physicians as a source of health information about the English monarchs during the long eighteenth century.

<sup>92</sup> For one example of this type of game of telephone, see *Flying Post or The Post Master*, July 30-August 1, 1700, Issue 816; *Post Boy*, July 27-30, 1700, Issue 828; *Flying Post or The Post Master*, July 27-30, 1700, Issue 815. The Earl of Burlington, who was recovered from an illness, was listed as still being sick in some papers, while others already had him in the ground. As the *Flying Post or The Post Master*, July 30-August 1, 1700, Issue 816 reported, “The general Report That was here of the E. of Burlington’s being dead, because of such news being brought to some of his Relations, proves false, for there are advices since that his Lordship is recovering.”

<sup>93</sup> Vernon, 3:96-7, 105. Instances of foreign monarchs having their physicians attend them were reported in the English press. See *English Post with New Foreign and Domestic*, October 27-29, 1701, Issue 164.

nobility.<sup>94</sup> These silences highlight the irregular trajectory of reporting on the king's health in newspapers as sacral ideas, lack of interest, and fears of prosecution persisted. A similar level of tact and decorum was not required when reporting on the health of foreign monarchs, as seen by an account in the *Flying Post* of September 1698.

The frequent discourse of the Death and Indisposition of the King of Spain, has occasioned many Arguments pro and con in this Town; and some Wagers about it were left upon the arrival of the last Paris Mail, but some People that have a long time liv'd by vain Hopes, to the no small lessening of their Estates. There are several bold Persons now upon the Exchange, that have laid considerable Wagers, That the King of Spain will outlive the King of France.<sup>95</sup>

Such conversations would have been seditious or treasonable if the topic of conversation had been the end of William's life, as "to compass or imagine the death of the king" was one of the offences laid out in the Treason Act of 1351.<sup>96</sup> This was the case in early July 1697, when Secretary of State Sir William Trumbull wrote to Henry Jones, a JP in Cornwall, that he was concerned with the "false and seditious news spread abroad in the country ... concerning his Majesty's sacred person, to the great terror and disquieting of persons well affected to the government."<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately no further details exist as to the exact nature of the news spread about William's person, but similar accounts

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<sup>94</sup> *London Post with Intelligence Foreign and Domestick*, June 17-19, 1700, Issue 162; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, June 15-18, 1700, Issue 765; *Post Boy*, June 18-20, 1788, Issue 811.

<sup>95</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, September 15-17, 1689, Issue 523.

<sup>96</sup> John Bellamy, *The Tudor Law of Treason* (1979; repr., New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 2013), 9.

<sup>97</sup> Hardy, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, 8:230. The spreading of false news about the king or great men of the nation was seditious according to the Slandorous Reports Act of 1378. See William Hawkins, *The Statutes at Large, from Magna Charta to the Seventh Year of King George the Second, Inclusive*, vol. 1 (London: John Baskett, 1735), 319.

undoubtedly emerged during the final eighteen months of his life, when his health became progressively worse.

Anxiety over the future of the Stuarts, and what would happen to the plans for the new war against France in the crisis over the Spanish Succession, continued to weigh on William's health during 1701 while he remained all too aware that there was no long-term heir in the Stuart line since the Duke of Gloucester's death the previous summer.<sup>98</sup> In this environment, with the succession in question and a Tory majority in the Commons opposed to the king, it is possible to still see the power held by the crown. With another war against France looming after Louis XIV proclaimed 'James III' the true King of England, and the Prince and Princess of Denmark being without an heir, this was a pivotal moment in English history. Nevertheless, the king's health was not a topic of parliamentary investigation, even though it was well-known that William was sick, nor was there a popular outcry demanding to hear from his physicians, who spent the summer months of 1701 constantly examining the sovereign and conferring with one another in an effort to restore his health before he left for the continent in July.<sup>99</sup> In a period of crisis, while aware that the king was ailing, no organized efforts occurred to discern the state of his illness. This was possibly because at least some residents of London heard so many rumors about the king's poor health that "the Town" was so accustomed to hear of the King's illnesses that men had ceased to be alarmed, and the final collapse came as a

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<sup>98</sup> This concern was resolved before William left for the continent when he provided the royal assent to the Act of Settlement, which passed the crown to the House of Hanover if Anne did not have any other children before her death.

<sup>99</sup> For more details on the events involving the king's physicians' efforts to find a method of treatment for his many aches and pains see Van der Kiste, 238-49.

great shock to his friends.”<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, the monarch’s authority and sacred nature may have buttressed him from any public discussion of these many illnesses.

### **William’s Final Illness**

William’s health continued to deteriorate through the final months of his life, although he remained actively engaged in war planning during this period. Around this same time, James II’s ailments were described in great detail to the public while the former monarch labored under poor health at St. Germain. The *Post Boy* of July 5-8, 1701 reported “...the late King James was taken very ill on Sunday last was sevenight, and since he has had a Pain in his Knee, which some think to be the Gout; however he continues very feeble, in-so-much that they are forced to Carry him in a Chair from one Room to the other.”<sup>101</sup> Around this same time, during the summer and autumn of 1701, with the war effort underway, there was great concern with William’s health and the press tracked his movements and vitals. Apparently not everyone was tired of hearing reports detailing his bodily constitution. From July to November, William was reported as being in excellent health.<sup>102</sup> One paper, known to be produced by a Whig-leaning individual, went so far as to write “The King of England is in as good Health as he hath

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<sup>100</sup> Margaret Maris, ed., *Verney Letters of the Eighteenth Century from the MSS at Claydon House* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1930), 1:104.

<sup>101</sup> *Post Boy*, July 5-8, 1701, Issue 958. The irony is that much of the description involving James II suffering from pain in his knee, gout, and the inability to walk could just as easily describe William’s health at the same time, although he did not require a chair to be carried from room to room, but occasionally up stairs.

<sup>102</sup> *London Gazette*, August 4-7, 1701, Issue 3729; *Post Boy*, October 11-14, 1701, Issue 1000; *New State of Europe or A True Account of Publick Transactions and Learning*, October 14-16, 1701, Issue 12.



had for many Years.”<sup>103</sup> Similar to earlier instances, even though the king had a cold in the middle of October 1701, the newspapers that covered the story stressed that he “took Physick by precaution” and was “very well again.”<sup>104</sup> Discussing the same cold, another newspaper mentioned that “...the King of England was something indisposed, so that he appeared but seldom in Public, but however; it did not hinder him from minding the Common concern....”<sup>105</sup> Still, the reality of the situation was more perilous than the public heard. One witness in The Hague, after seeing William that October, commented to his physician, ““It seems to me that our master, who walks so slowly, is leaving us at a very great pace. The doctor answered, ‘Even quicker than you would think.’”<sup>106</sup> Bishop Burnet described the situation in these terms: William “was for some days in so bad a Condition, that they [his companions] were in great fear of his Life.”<sup>107</sup> Although he was delayed by his indisposition, William finally sailed for the last time from the Netherlands to England, arriving on the night of November 4, 1701.

During his time on the continent, there were two developments going on in the public sphere – one located in England and one in France. With William’s health problems, and descriptions of his indisposition appearing in the English press for over

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<sup>103</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, October 2-4, 1701, Issue 1000.

<sup>104</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 14-16, 1701, Issue 887.

<sup>105</sup> *London Post with Intelligence Foreign and Domestick*, October 17-19, 1701, Issue 374. Other instances of reports stating that William had recovered: *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 14-16, 1701, Issue 887; *Flying Post or The Post Master*, October 18-21, 1701, Issue 1007; *Flying Post or The Post Master*, October 23-25, 1701, Issue 1009; *Post Boy*, October 23-25, 1701, Issue 1005; *Flying Post or The Post Master*, October 25-28, 1701, Issue 1010; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 25-28, 1701, Issue 892. Note the absence of any reports in the *London Gazette*.

<sup>106</sup> As quoted in Van der Zee, 469.

<sup>107</sup> Burnet, 3:408.

two weeks, there is little surprise to learn that the eye of the French king, especially as the War of the Spanish Succession was getting underway, was attracted to the reports. For instance, in the first *Flying Post* of November 1701, when the English king was still in the Netherlands, it was noted:

His Majesty, blessed be God, is in good Health. The Fr. Court hath been mighty inquisitive into the state of his Health, because they know that there's much depends upon it. The Spanish Ambassador at that Court recei'd a very particular Account of His Majesty's Health, from Don Bernardo de Quiros, which he imparted to the King of France, and he gave it to his chief Physician M. Fagon, to have his Opinion of it: But we trust that God will disappoint their Expectations.<sup>108</sup>

Later in November 1701, after William's return to England, another dispatch from The Hague followed up on the previous report, observing, "We have Letters from France which say, that the People there were made to believe, that the King of England was so ill that he could never be able to return thither; and some of 'em were so impudent as to spread a Report of his being dead. Their Faction was extreamly [*sic*] dissappointed [*sic*] when they saw his Majesty go from hence in good Health."<sup>109</sup> Rumors of this type were nothing new and had appeared in private correspondence before, such as a letter to the heir of the House of Hanover, Princess Sophia, which read "... King William's health is so delicate that he can't live long."<sup>110</sup> Although written in April 1701, and exactly what the Hanoverians wanted to believe, the comment in the letter about the English king's health was even more accurate seven months later.

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<sup>108</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, November 1-4, 1701, Issue 1013. For the book I plan to track down Tallard's correspondence to see if I can verify this story.

<sup>109</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, November 13-15, 1701, Issue 1018.

<sup>110</sup> Maria Kroll, trans. and ed., *Letters from Liselotte-Elisabeth Charlotte, Princess Palatine and Duchess of Orléans, 'Madame' 1652-1722* (London: Victory Gollancz LTD, 1970), 96.

During the summer and autumn of 1701, while the French were hearing about William's poor health and possible death, his English subjects were not getting the full story either. Upon sailing to Margate on November 4, 1701, William had been ill to the point that he collapsed and had to be carried from the ship.<sup>111</sup> Even though he slept at Sittingburn that evening, the celebrations that were planned for his birthday in the capital proceeded without issue "...and the Publick Joy on this occasion being very much increased by the News of His Majesty's good Health, and safe arrival, the same was expressed in an extraordinary manner, by Ringing of Bells, Bonfires, and Illuminations in the Cities of London and Westminster."<sup>112</sup> Upon William's arrival at Hampton Court on November 5, he was overwhelmed with deputies and addresses of people wishing him well and vowing their support in the war against France. Many of these addresses reaffirmed the view of the king's sacred body and person.<sup>113</sup> This type of address was still pouring in at the end of the month. Two in particular are worth a closer look. One, from the inhabitants of Windsor on November 29, stated:

May it please your Majesty, to give us leave to express not only our present joy and satisfaction to see your Majesty returned in health and Safety home, but also our past fears and just apprehensions when we heard of your Indisposition abroad. How dear to every good man is that Important Life, upon whose single thread alone all the Liberties of Europe do intirely depend!<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Van der Kiste, 248 and Van der Zee, 469-70.

<sup>112</sup> *London Gazette*, November 3-6, 1701, Issue 3755. Also see *Flying Post or The Post Master*, November 4-6, 1701, Issue 1014 and *Post Man and the Historical Account*, November 4-6, 1701, Issue 896.

<sup>113</sup> *London Gazette*, November 6-10, 1701, Issue 3756 has multiple instances of the addresses received by William.

<sup>114</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, December 2-4, 1701, Issue 907.

Such addresses reflect the importance in quashing any rumors involving the king's poor health, as the Jacobites may have exploited any fears that developed. Another address directly relates to the king, but is a transcript of advice from the inhabitants of Southwark to their newly elected members of Parliament. In particular, the suggestions include:

Above all, Gentlemen, we conjure you to be most tender of the Person of his Majesty, to endeavor that no Indignity may be offered to a Prince, born for the good of Europe, to distinguish between one who sits upon his Throne, and sends his General Abroad to make Slaughter and Desolation among his Neighbours, and a King who has so often, and so generously exposed his Life for the Liberty of his Country against this Common Enemy.<sup>115</sup>

Between the address from Windsor and the advice from Southwark, it is without doubt that at least some subjects held the physical and political bodies of William in high regard and were interested in how his health would fare. This is in contrast to the generally unfavorable view of William, described by Daniel Defoe and others, that persisted until his death.<sup>116</sup>

As William's life reached its end point in March 1702, his subjects still were not getting the full story on his health. On February 20, he had been riding a new horse which tripped and threw the king. He broke his collarbone and although it took a few days to be reported in the press, all the accounts assured the public that he was perfectly recovered.<sup>117</sup> Even the *London Gazette* reported on the last day of the month that "His

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<sup>115</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, November 27-29, 1701, Issue 1024.

<sup>116</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The Mock Mourners. A Satyr, by Way of Elegy on King William* (London, 1702). For a description of the negative view of William, even after his death, see Maris, 1:107: Mrs. Adams wrote on March 21, 1702: "that noe King can bee less lamentid then this has bin, evin by thos that was his greitest admierers in his life tiem [*sic*]. I due not mean thos that has lost ther plasis & ther other profit consarnes; the very day hee dieid, ther was severall expresions of Joy publickley spok in the strets-of having one of ther own nation to rain over them."

Majesty had last week an unhappy Accident by a Fall from his Horse in Hunting; but is, God be praised, very well again.”<sup>118</sup> The problem with this last report is that it came out after William and his physicians had already discovered that the king’s fractured collarbone was not healing properly and that his right hand and arm looked puffy.<sup>119</sup> The damage done by the fall from his horse was problematic enough on its own, but then on March 3, the king developed a fever and three days later could no longer take medicine or keep food down. His physicians’ skills exhausted, still the newspapers did not comment on the final days of the dying monarch. Instead the reports that appeared mentioned how the king “continues very well” and had recovered so much from his fall that he could now “put on his Coat.”<sup>120</sup> The only reference to William’s failing constitution was that he had appointed a commission to give the royal assent to a number of parliamentary bills, instead of going himself, and an ambiguous reference in the *Post Boy* of March 5-7, 1702 that “the Publick Stock fell yesterday....”<sup>121</sup> The use of this commission was troubling to at least one person, Lady Gardiner, who wrote to Sir John Verney that, “Tis sartain the Doctors found his danger great when he sent Commissioners to pas severall Acts in Parlement In Stead of him....”<sup>122</sup> In contrast to the inadequate coverage of royal health,

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<sup>117</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, February 21-24, 1702, Issue 1061; *Post Boy*, February 21-24, 1702, Issue 1057; *English Post with News Foreign and Domestick*, February 23-25, 1702, Issue 215; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, February 24-26, 1702, Issue 936.

<sup>118</sup> *London Gazette*, February 26-March 2, 1702, Issue 3788.

<sup>119</sup> Van der Kiste, 252.

<sup>120</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, February 28-March 3, 1702, Issue 938 and *Post Boy*, February 28-March 3, 1702, Issue 1060.

<sup>121</sup> *Post Boy*, March 5-7, 1702, Issue 1062; *Flying Post or The Post Master*, February 28-March 3, 1702, Issue 1064; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, February 28-March 3, 1702, Issue 938.

the newspapers continued to monitor the poor health of the nobility, including the Earl of Drogheda who “continues still ill.”<sup>123</sup> By the time the newspapers did report fully on William’s last indisposition, he had already died on March 8. Perhaps this failure of the newspapers to provide timely coverage explains why one Mrs. Adams wrote on March 21, 1702 that, “...I thout the Death of the King wod fly fast enuf without the help of my pen. Here is nues plenty, bot whot one tells me, the next companey contreydicks, so I know not which to writ....”<sup>124</sup> With William dead, any sacred veil providing privacy to his health and body was gone which explains why the newspapers published detailed descriptions of his final illness and how, in the end, he was overwhelmed by “a Fever attended with a Vomiting and Looseness.”<sup>125</sup> There even appeared a pamphlet written by the physicians who conducted an autopsy on “The [king’s] *Body* [which] in general was much emaciated.”<sup>126</sup> With the king gone, the sacred veil transferred to his sister-in-law.

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<sup>122</sup> Maris, 1:104.

<sup>123</sup> *Post Boy*, March 3-5, 1702, Issue 1061 for illness of Earl of Drogheda and *Post Boy*, March 7-10, 1702, Issue 1063 for a full account of the final illness of William which explained that “The Lords of his Majesty’s most Honourable Privy council with abundance of the Nobility and Gentry, attended all the while in the Withdrawing-Room, Presence, and Anti-Chamber, and several of them were called it at times to whom his Majesty spoke a little, and then they withdrew.”

<sup>124</sup> Maris, 1:107.

<sup>125</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, March 7-10, 1702, Issue 1067.

<sup>126</sup> *London Gazette*, March 7-9, 1702, Issue 3790; *English Post with News Foreign and Domestick*, March 6-9, 1702, Issue 220; *Flying Post or The Post Master*, March 7-10, 1702, Issue 1067; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, March 7-10, 1702, Issue 940; *Post Boy*, March 7-10, 1702, Issue 1063. For account of William’s autopsy see: *The Report of the Physicians and Surgeons, Commanded to assist At the Dissecting the Body of His late Majesty at Kensington, March the Tenth MDCC* (London: John Nutt, 1702), 2. Also see Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarch 1660-1714* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 480-506.

### **A Nursing Mother?**

When Anne Stuart became queen in March 1702, she was already worn down from seventeen failed pregnancies and strained relationships with her sister, brother-in-law, father, and half-brother. For many of her subjects, her body and health were at the center of their understanding of the sovereign. In addition to her inability to give birth to a healthy heir, she suffered from painful gout that prevented her from walking on her own for much of her life, including to her coronation. On top of this she suffered eye problems and was grossly overweight, to the point that in modern medical parlance she was obese. With all of these ailments, she was the perfect monarch to follow William III. The people were accustomed to a person with a weak constitution sitting on the throne, whose sacredness was already accepted by at least part of the population. Anne enjoyed an even higher elevation of divine association and popularity though, as she was English, Anglican, a true Stuart, and resumed the practice of touching for the King's Evil. After the death of her son, the Duke of Gloucester in 1700, Anne needed all the help she could get in maintaining her popularity.

Long before Anne limped her way to the throne, she gained infamy in England for her inability to perform the most important function for a female, especially a royal, during the early modern period. Try as she and her husband George, Prince of Denmark did to produce children, they were unable to leave behind a son or daughter to take over the throne and secure the Protestant Succession through the Stuart line. As Robert Bucholz has argued, the female royal body was a problem in the early modern period due

to the medical beliefs of the age and perceptions of gender.<sup>127</sup> Yet, in the most obvious gender-related component between the press' coverage of William and Anne's health, there is not much difference. In nearly every instance of Anne's pregnancies, print culture made some reference to them. But, as with nearly every other type of report on royal health during William's reign, little detail was provided.

In order to appreciate how little the coverage of Anne's obstetrical activities differed from those of other elite women at the time, the two contrary scenarios must be considered: a successful birth compared to a miscarriage or stillbirth. For the latter, contemporary newspapers provide an example from 1697. The *Post Boy* reported "The Dutchess [*sic*] of *Ormond* has miscarried at Badminton[?], at the duke of Beaufort's House, who is her Father."<sup>128</sup> For Anne's miscarriages, there is greater detail provided about her health after having given birth, which is understandable, as she was the next in line to the throne. An example of this type of coverage occurred in January 1700. Once again the *Post Boy* observed, "Her Royal Highness the Princess Ann [*sic*] of Denmark, who had the misfortune to Miscarry of a Prince on Wednesday morning, is as well as her Condition will permit; the whole Court, and Kingdom in general, are much Concern'd at this Mischance which befel [*sic*] her Highness."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Robert Bucholz, "'The Stomach of a Queen,' or Size Matters: Gender, Body Image, and the Historical Reputation of Queen Anne," in *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, eds. Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 249.

<sup>128</sup> *Post Boy*, May 13-15, 1697, Issue 316. Anne also had a miscarriage in 1697. Hardy, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, 8:508. December 10, 1697 William III visited Anne at St. James' where she had "been indisposed, and miscarried some days ago."

<sup>129</sup> *Post Boy*, January 25-27, 1700, Issue 749. Also see *Post Man and the Historical Account*, January 23-25, 1700, Issue 706; *Flying Post or The Post Master*, January 25-27, 1700, Issue 736.



In the other type of troubled birth that Anne suffered, in which the child lived only a few hours, accounts are quite similar to those listed above. As the *London Gazette* reported in October 1690, “Yesterday Morning the Princess of *Denmark* was delivered of a Daughter, who lived about two hours and was Christned [*sic*], and privately buried last Night in *Westminster Abby*. Her Royal Highness came about two Months before Her Time; but is, Thanks be to God, very well.”<sup>130</sup> In these types of situations, the grief of the nation was usually referenced, as concerns about a Stuart being able to produce an heir were on the minds of many English citizens and foreigners.<sup>131</sup> However, Anne’s one successful birth received more coverage. For comparison sake, a report on the birth of another noble child can be found in a 1703 newspaper which stated “...we hear that the Dutchess of Bedford is brought to bed of a Son, to the great joy of that noble Family.”<sup>132</sup> Understandably, William Duke of Gloucester’s birth on July 24, 1689 received considerably more attention. In the one available newspaper, the *London Gazette*, the sigh of relief felt by the nation is evident, as is the importance of witnesses at a royal birth:

This morning about Four a Clock, her Royal Highness the Princess Anne of Denmark was safely delivered of a Son: The Queen was present the whole time of her Labour, which lasted about 3 hours, and the King, with most of the Persons of Quality about the Court, came into her royal Highness’s Bed-chamber before she was delivered. Her Royal Highness and the young Prince are very well; to the great satisfaction of Their

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<sup>130</sup> *London Gazette*, October 13-16, 1690, Issue 2601. For a similar situation two years later see *London Gazette*, April 14-18, 1692, Issue 2758.

<sup>131</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, September 15-17, 1698, Issue 523; *Flying Post or The Post Master*, January 23-25, 1700, Issue 735.

<sup>132</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, August 14-17, 1703, Issue 1172.

Majesties, and the Joy of the whole Court; as it will doubtless be of the whole Kingdom.<sup>133</sup>

Residents from outside the capital expressed equal levels of enthusiasm upon learning the good news. Two issues later, the *London Gazette* reported on the inhabitants of Norwich who had just heard about the Duke of Gloucester's birth:

Soon after the good News of her Royal Highness the Princess *Anne of Denmark's* being delivered of a Son arrived at this City, the Bells were rung, and towards the evening Preparations were made for more solemn Expressions of the Joy of the Citizens; and about nine a Clock, the Duke of Norfolk, with many of the Country Gentlemen, (who stayed in Town for that end) went into the Market-place, where the Mayor and Aldermen were present in their Formalities at a great Bonfire; the Windows of all the Houses being filled with Lights, the Healths of Their Majesties, the Prince and Princes[sic] of Denmark, and the young Prince were drank, at every of which Guns were discharged, which were answered by Cannon from the Duke's Palace....<sup>134</sup>

The future queen's health and body were openly reported in the newspaper when an heir was involved, one of the few times such conversations regarding Anne took place.

While the citizens of England celebrated the joyous news of Anne having produced a Protestant heir, it was only a matter of time before those around the young duke realized he would follow in the unhappy footsteps of his parents by suffering from his own set of physical ailments. As Anne once wrote to Sarah, the eventual Duchess of Marlborough, in the 1690s, "My poor boy has vomitted [sic] this afternoon, whether it will prove anything or no God knows. However 'tis impossible to help being alarmed at every little thing."<sup>135</sup> Such concern was warranted, as David Green has made clear:

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<sup>133</sup> *London Gazette*, July 22-25, 1689, Issue 2473.

<sup>134</sup> *London Gazette*, July 29-August 1, 1689, Issue 2475.

<sup>135</sup> As quoted in David Green, *Queen Anne* (London: Collins, 1970), 64.

“...when the child grew old enough to walk ... it became obvious that there was something seriously wrong. Gloucester’s head was too big for him ... he was apt to totter; stairs were too much for him, and if he fell he could not get up without help.”<sup>136</sup> Couple the complaints listed by Green with a series of fevers, or agues, and it was no wonder Anne did her best to keep her son away from the public spotlight, although on some occasions this could not be avoided.<sup>137</sup> One such event was his installation as a Knight of the Garter on July 24, 1696, his seventh birthday. The account in the *London Gazette* provided details of the ceremony and reception, including the “Repeated Healths to, and Prayers for, the long Life and Prosperity” of the royal family, but made no comment on Gloucester’s appearance or that he left dinner early because of stomach pains.<sup>138</sup>

Unfortunately for Anne and George, their son would not live much past his eleventh birthday. While the newspapers were full of reports of the ceremony at Windsor and the ball and fireworks that happened on that occasion, no newspaper observed how the duke became over-heated and fatigued while dancing on July 24, 1700.<sup>139</sup> The boy was diagnosed with Scarlet Fever and bled by his physicians before Dr. Radcliffe, the same doctor who treated King William III and Mary II, was called to assess the situation, where he expressed his outrage that Gloucester had been bled. In Radcliffe’s rough way

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 55. For more details on his ailments, see Anne Somerset, *Queen Anne: The Politics of Passion: A Biography* (London: Harper Press, 2012), 142-4. James Anderson Winn argues in *Queen Anne: Patroness of the Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 140, that the duke suffered from hydrocephalus and balance issues, but was not mentally impaired.

<sup>137</sup> Lewis, 17.

<sup>138</sup> Green, 73-4. For a description of Gloucester’s investment see: *London Gazette*, July 23-27, 1696, Issue 3204. For an example of what a description of a regular investment into the Knight of the Garter was like, see *London Gazette*, April 23-26, 1694, Issue 2969.

<sup>139</sup> Green, 79-80.

of speaking, he responded to the bleeding of the Protestant heir, stating “Then you have destroyed him and you may finish him, for I will not prescribe.”<sup>140</sup> Narcissus Luttrell’s diary records that people were aware that Anne and George’s son was ill and that physicians had been called to attendance, although it was rumored the child had smallpox.<sup>141</sup> The newspapers were no help in the matter, commenting on July 30 that “His Highness the Duke of Gloucester, was much indisposed last Week, but I hear that he is since pretty well again, to the great joy of the whole Nation.”<sup>142</sup> Ironically, this report came out the same day that the boy died. In the aftermath of this tragedy, rumor spread about the final cause of death and reached such an extreme that one newspaper account for August 1, 1700, explained: “the distemper he dyed of is so variously reported, that we avoid to speak of it for fear of any mistake.”<sup>143</sup> Such fear was the product of libel prosecutions for spreading false information and the delicacy of the situation, although this did not always deter authors. In 1702, an anonymous pamphlet appeared that questioned why Anne suffered so many stillbirths and miscarriages. The author(s) suggested that a certain physician, Dr. Radcliffe, was responsible for these failed births since he was in league with the Pretender “to cut off the Princess from her right to the

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<sup>140</sup> As quoted in Green, 79.

<sup>141</sup> Luttrell, 4:671-2.

<sup>142</sup> *Post Boy*, July 27-30, 1700, Issue 828. Also see *Post Man and the Historical Account*, July 27-30, 1700, Issue 783. Even in the situation of a royal child, the pattern was adhered to of discussing an illness after the patient has recovered and providing few overall details.

<sup>143</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, July 30-August 1, 1700, Issue 784. More details about his final illness can be found in the writings of Edward Hanes, British Library, Add MS 61101, f. 44. A copy of the Duke of Gloucester’s death certificate is available at the Surrey History Centre, Woking, in the “Somers and Cocks Families Correspondence and Papers,” 371/14/C/5.

Crown....”<sup>144</sup> The pamphlet does not, however, make any reference to the successful birth of William Duke of Gloucester.

Given how frequently the Duke of Gloucester was indisposed during his short life, and the fact that his physical appearance made him stand out, it may be wondered why his life and health were not more closely commented on in the press. While there are no recorded addresses denoting him as a sacred individual, unlike his aunt, uncle, and mother, his position as both a royal and as a child provided him a sort of protection in the public sphere. In the thousands of newspaper issues consulted for this chapter, I did not come across a single discussion of a British child’s health, aside from a few days after birth or when discussing an already deceased youth. There were accounts of foreign royal children in the press, but never domestic.<sup>145</sup>

### **The Image of a Queen**

Between 1700 and 1702, Anne occasionally appeared in the newspapers because of her health. Luttrell relates that she was “much indisposed upon the death of the duke of Gloucester [*sic*]....”<sup>146</sup> In the middle of November 1701, after William had returned from the Netherlands for the final time, the press reported, “The King designs for Windsor, to Visit the Princess of Denmark, who is so ill of the Gout that she cannot stir.”<sup>147</sup> A week later these same newspapers observed that “The Princess of Denmark is so well

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<sup>144</sup> *Some Few Queries about the Preparatives of Making Way for a Prince of Wales in the Year 1687, &c* (1702).

<sup>145</sup> *Daily Courant*, October 17, 1713, Issue 3748 and *Daily Courant*, March 31, 1714, Issue 3879.

<sup>146</sup> Luttrell, 4:672.

<sup>147</sup> *New State of Europe or A True Account of Publick Transactions and Learning*, November 18-20, 1701, Issue 27. For an earlier instance of this type of report, see *Post Boy*, December 5-8, 1696, Issue 248.

Recovered, that she is now able to walk about the Room.”<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless, after William’s death on March 8, 1702, and in the lead-up to her coronation, there was another flare up of this ailment. On the night of March 10, the day before her accession and speech to Parliament, Lord Treasurer Sydney Godolphin wrote to Robert Harley, the Speaker of the Commons: “She [Anne] is very unwieldy and lame; must she come in person to the House of Lords, or may she send for the two houses to come to her.”<sup>149</sup> Triumphantly, the next day Anne delivered an engaging speech at the House of Lords and what caught people’s attention was the way the queen presented herself and spoke, not her physical limitations.<sup>150</sup> For her coronation on April 23, despite the fact that she had to be carried to it in a chair because she was so lame, what most stands out in the accounts from the newspapers is the report in the *Flying Post*: “The People testified their Joy as her Majesty passed thro’ them, with loud Acclamations, and expressed their great Satisfaction to see her Majesty look so well, and with an Air of so much royalty and good Nature.”<sup>151</sup> This excitement at being able to see the queen looking good, unfortunately, became all too rare as her reign continued.

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<sup>148</sup> *New State of Europe or A True Account of Publick Transactions and Learning*, November 22-25, 1701, Issue 29.

<sup>149</sup> H.M.C., *Fifteenth Report*, Appendix IV, 34.

<sup>150</sup> Bucholz, *Augustan Court*, 205 and Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne*, New ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 153.

<sup>151</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, April 23-25, 1702, Issue 1087. Addresses presented to the new queen referenced her sacred person/body. See one example in *London Gazette*, April 16-20, 1702, Issue 3802 and an undated address from the city of Chester, “City of Chester Assembly,” Cheshire Archives, ZAF 49 b/7.



Figure 1. "The Proceeding of the Queen to her Coronation." Engraving by John Overton. 1702. Image from British Museum, #Y,1.139. This image incorrectly shows Queen Anne, at the center beneath the canopy, walking to her coronation.



Figure 2. Playing card from a deck which depicted events from the reign of Queen Anne. Image from David Green, *Queen Anne*, last picture insert before page 73. This image correctly shows that Queen Anne was carried to and from the coronation because gout prevented her from walking.

As someone who was ill for so much of her life, to discuss the entirety of Anne's reign is outside the scope of this chapter. Instead, it focuses on situations similar to those faced by an ailing William III, to illustrate the influence of her gender and of the lingering beliefs of sacral kingship on newspaper reports. Building on Bucholz's work noted above, another author whose research touches on the queen's sacred appeal to her subjects is Hannah Smith. As she states:

Anne and her supporters used a range of images in their attempts to legitimate her position, and her undoubted personal popularity may well have lain in the fact that she projected not just one sympathetic image but several. But Anne possibly sensed that although these images were compelling, she had to embody an older form of legitimisation if she, as a post-revolutionary female ruler, were to be anything more than a popular figurehead, a feeling assisted by her own inclinations about the sacred character of the monarchy.<sup>152</sup>

While Smith focuses on how Anne's production of paintings influenced public opinion of the queen's sacral quality, both Smith and Bucholz have commented on the importance associated with Anne resuming the touching for the King's Evil.<sup>153</sup> By recognizing how important this ceremony was to her subjects, Anne brought herself into frequent contact with ailing individuals. However, the newspapers, for the most part, did not comment on the queen's health during these events, which although proclaimed publically, were sometimes held privately.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Hannah Smith, "'Last of all the Heavenly Birth': Queen Anne and Sacral Queenship," *Parliamentary History* 28, no. 1 (2009): 148.

<sup>153</sup> While passing references will be made to this aspect in the chapter, I refer the reader to pages Bucholz, *Augustan Court*, 210-12 and Smith, "'Last of all the Heavenly Birth,'" 143-6.

<sup>154</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 8-10, 1702, Issue 1026; *Flying Post or The Post Master*, November 26-28, 1702, Issue 1180. More information on these events can be found in *London Gazette*, May 15-18, 1704, Issue 4019; James J. Cartwright, ed., *The Wentworth Papers 1705-1739*.



### Anne Takes a (Progress to) Bath

During the first half of Anne's reign, it was easier for her subjects to see the queen in a public setting. While those in the capital, or just outside, might see her on her way to Parliament or at one of the occasional thanksgivings merited by the martial success of the Duke of Marlborough, for those at a distance from London the opportunities were rarer.<sup>155</sup> As Bucholz has shown, Anne was aware of the importance of progresses, as demonstrated by two journeys to Bath, in 1702 and 1703, and another to Newmarket in her first two years on the throne.<sup>156</sup> However, in the case of the trips to Bath, there was more than politics involved. In 1703, from August 18 through October 9, Anne and her consort went to the spa town in the hopes of improving their health by taking the water.<sup>157</sup> In the newspapers at this time, few accounts referenced the health of the queen and prince.<sup>158</sup> Aside from the *London Gazette's* description of their arrival to

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*Selected from the Private and Family Correspondence of Thomas Wentworth, Lord Raby, Created in 1711 Earl of Strafford, of Stainborough, Co. York* (London: Wyman & Sons, 1883), 375.

<sup>155</sup> For but one account of spectators viewing the queen, see Abel Boyer, *The History of the Reign of Queen Anne, Digested into Annals. Year the Third* (London: A. Roper, 1705), 3:97. Bucholz has also mentioned that beginning in 1707, inn-keepers and other individuals advertised rooms or balconies that provided a view of the queen's route during thanksgivings. See Bucholz, *Augustan Court*, 345. For a fictionalized, although probably quite accurate description of someone's disappointment at going to see Anne in public, but not actually being able to view her, see *Observer*, November 10-13, 1703, Issue 63.

<sup>156</sup> Bucholz, *Augustan Court*, 212.

<sup>157</sup> Although I have not found any specific evidence to prove this, it is possible that Anne, who had not been pregnant in over two years, hoped the Bath waters would increase her chance of conceiving an heir, as had been the case for Mary of Modena in 1686. Winn, 130 also supports this reasoning.

<sup>158</sup> For an account published after the completion of the queen's journey to Bath in 1702 see, *The Queen's Famous Progress, or, Her Majesty's Royal Journey to the BATH, and Happy Return* (London: J.W., 1702). For accounts of Anne and George visiting Bath in 1703 see: *London Gazette*, August 19-22, 1703, Issue 3942; *Observer*, September 1-4, 1703, Issue 43; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, September 21-23, 1703, Issue 1187; *Daily Courant*, September 24, 1703, Issue 449; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, September 28-30, 1703, Issue 1189; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 2-

the city, little was made of the event by the fourth estate. Yet, it was clear how much this type of trip meant to her subjects because, once in the city of Bath, “Her Majesty then proceeded towards the Lodgings prepared for Her at Dr. Peirce’s.... the Bells ringing, and the Streets, Balconies and Windows being adorn’d, and fill’d with vast numbers of People. Her Majesty in Her way through the Town was welcom’d with loud Acclamations of Joy, for the Honour done us by Her Royal Presence.”<sup>159</sup> During the rest of their stay, the newspapers took little notice of the sovereign’s efforts to restore her health, or George’s efforts to do the same. It was not until early October 1703 that print culture even touched upon the reason for this journey by stating that Anne had returned from Bath “...and arrived here [Windsor] this evening (God be praised) in very good Health.”<sup>160</sup> At the end of the month of October, newspapers were still declaring the same healthfulness, for queen and prince, having never spelled out in earlier papers, even before they left for Bath, what in particular ailed the two.<sup>161</sup>

Despite the positive spin of the newspapers and one eyewitness stating that Anne and George “think themselves better” after visiting Bath, the reality was that the queen’s health had actually become worse while she was there.<sup>162</sup> Toward the latter part of her time at the spa, she had developed gout in both feet, while her knee also gave her

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5, 1703, Issue 1191; *Daily Courant*, October 5, 1703, Issue 458; *London Gazette*, October 7-11, 1703, Issue 3956.

<sup>159</sup> *London Gazette*, August 19-22, 1703, Issue 3942.

<sup>160</sup> *London Gazette*, October 7-11, 1703, Issue 3956; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 9-12, 1703, Issue 1194.

<sup>161</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 28-30, 1703, Issue 1201.

<sup>162</sup> Somerset, 260.

problems, to the point that she was “so lame that she can hardly walk the length of a room, and that with two sticks....”<sup>163</sup> The press made no mention of these ailments, despite the fact that even after returning to Windsor, and its skeleton court, the queen was unable to walk by the end of October 1703. Anne warned the Duchess of Marlborough to not mention her lameness to anyone because otherwise Anne would be “tormented with a thousand questions about it.”<sup>164</sup> While word of mouth undoubtedly carried the news outside the palace walls, the newspapers did not specifically mention any ailments afflicting the queen. The only reference in the public sphere about her actual physical problems at this point comes from *The Daily Courant*. Unlike other papers that observed the queen attending Parliament on November 9, 1703, *The Daily Courant* noted that she “...came in a chair....”<sup>165</sup> Although little discussion was made at this time about Anne’s lameness, this was, most likely, because her inability to walk had been noted in the press since the 1690s and hardly would have continued to be newsworthy unless associated with some larger ailment.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, one must wonder if her subjects ever thought that her motto, *Semper Eadem*, referred to Anne as being always the same: indisposed or ailing.

When one considers how much the queen endured during her life, with her own physical frailties and the emotional scars left behind by all the unsuccessful pregnancies,

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. and Beatrice C. Brown, ed., *The Letters and Diplomatic Instructions of Queen Anne* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968), 127.

<sup>164</sup> Somerset, 260.

<sup>165</sup> *Daily Courant*, November 10, 1703, Issue 489. *English Post with News Foreign and Domestick*, November 8-10, 1703, Issue 475 makes no reference to a chair.

<sup>166</sup> *Daily Courant*, November 14, 1702, Issue 181. One can almost sense the wonderment in the writer’s description of Anne during the November 1702 thanksgiving the previous year when she did not use a chair: “Her Majesty walk’d between my Lord Chamberlain and the Duke of Somerset, without being supported by either of them.

it is amazing how much work she actually performed in attending parliamentary debates, meeting with her cabinet council, reading foreign dispatches, and trying to stay above party strife in an age when it was rampant.<sup>167</sup> However, there were times when her health acted up to such a degree that she was not able to live up to her own high standards. In the early months of 1706, Anne was under the weather and unable to attend council meetings as she normally did. As a result, she needed the Cabinet to meet in her bedchamber on January 6, missed a meeting on January 7, and required another in the next week to be held in her bedchamber.<sup>168</sup> By the end of the month, Anne recovered and was able to attend an anniversary service for the death of King Charles I in the Chapel Royal. The newspapers made no reference to ailing health, although the same was not true for the Reverend Dr. Moss, a royal chaplain, who “being indisposed” could no longer preach before the queen.<sup>169</sup>

### **An Ill Consort**

In early February 1706, Anne’s subjects did read about the queen when she celebrated her birthday on February 5, a day early, at which “There was a very magnificent Appearance at Court of the Nobility and Gentry, where there was an Entertainment of Musick, and a Play in the Evening. The great Guns of the Tower and

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<sup>167</sup> For more on the active and capable role Anne took in politics see: Bucholz, *Augustan Court*; Bucholz, “Stomach of a Queen”; Gregg, *Queen Anne*, Somerset, *Queen Anne*, and Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne*, Rev. ed. (London: Hambledon Press, 1987). In particular, Bucholz, “Stomach of a Queen,” and Bucholz, *Augustan Court*, but also Gregg, and Somerset, have helped rehabilitate Anne’s image to show that earlier historians grossly misjudged her reign and capabilities based on her gender and size.

<sup>168</sup> William Cowper, *The Private Diary of William, First Earl Cowper, Lord Chancellor of England*, ed. Edward Craven Hawtrey (Eton: The Press of E. Williams, 1833), 32-4; Somerset, 294; Green, 149.

<sup>169</sup> *Post Boy*, January 29-31, 1706, Issue 1673.

those of St. James's Park were discharged; and in London and Westminster there were Bonfires, illuminations, Ringing of Bells, and other Rejoycings suitable to the occasion."<sup>170</sup> However, while Anne's health was stable, the same was not true for her husband, who became ill a few days after the party and six weeks later was still coughing up blood and worrying his wife.<sup>171</sup> This was hardly a new occurrence for the prince, who suffered his first bad bout of health as consort in August 1702. It was this occasion that prompted George and Anne to journey to Bath later that month.<sup>172</sup> Yet, the progress did no good, since upon his return from the spa he was still dealing with health issues. The Dutch resident in London observed that George was bled three times over the course of a couple days at the end of October 1702.<sup>173</sup> In his case, what was considered a life threatening situation, the newspapers did report on the event. Multiple newspapers noted the Prince of Denmark's absence at the Lord Mayor's Day dinner on October 29, 1702, one even mentioning that "...His Highness [was] being relieved by bleeding" at that time.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> *London Gazette*, February 4-7, 1706, Issue 4199; *Post Boy*, February 5-7, 1706, Issue 1676. For more details on the occasion, see Bucholz, *Augustan Court*, 216-9.

<sup>171</sup> Somerset, 294.

<sup>172</sup> Gregg, 161.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>174</sup> *English Post with News Foreign and Domestick*, October 28-30, 1702, Issue 321; *London Gazette*, October 29-November 2, 1702, Issue 3858; *Post Boy*, October 29-31, 1702, Issue 1165; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 29-31, 1702, Issue 1044; *English Post with News Foreign and Domestick*, November 2-4, 1702, Issue 323; *Post Boy*, November 3-5, 1702, Issue 1167; *Post Boy*, November 5-7, 1702, Issue 1168. What remains unclear is how newspapers determined if an illness was life-threatening or not. Part of this process may have been by the extent and fervor of the rumors about town or by the comments and diagnoses of the attending physicians. For more on the physicians' role in this matter, see chapter 5 below.

Thus, the absence of information about George's health troubles in 1706 is interesting, especially after so much had been made about the connection people saw between the constitutions of the consort and the queen.<sup>175</sup> As winter 1706 turned into spring, and the queen was busy meeting with a number of foreign representatives and attending Parliament on multiple occasions, references to her husband were scarce in the newspaper.<sup>176</sup> He was mentioned as traveling back and forth between London and Windsor with the queen between April 13 and April 20, and is referenced as journeying with his wife for the summer to Windsor at the end of May, but never with any details of his health provided.<sup>177</sup> It is not until an address appearing in the *London Gazette* of June 17-20, 1706 that anything about George's health appeared in a newspaper. As the dissenting ministers around London petitioned the queen, they "...most fervently pray[ed] for Her Majesty's Prosperity; that Her Reign may be render'd famous by the happy Union of the Kingdoms of Great Britain; and that Her Royal Consort, the Prince, may enjoy a confirm'd Health."<sup>178</sup> There are three possible suggestions for why so much less was said about George coughing up blood in 1706 than in 1702. First, it is possible that the court was getting better at keeping private information from leaking. The second

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<sup>175</sup> *Observer*, October 23-27, 1703, Issue 58 includes a poem from the 1702 trip to Bath which reads: "Ye Pow'rful Streams your wonted Gifts convey/And hear a Monarch, and her Subjects Pray,/In GEORGE'S Life bright ANNA'S is secure,/In ANNA's are her Dutious People's sure./Preserve the Prince, or ye the Queen destroy;/And blast our Hopes, and still our growing Joy...."

<sup>176</sup> For details on Anne's activities: *English Post with New Foreign and Domestick*, March 5-7, 1706, Issue 1003; *London Gazette*, March 18-21, 1706, Issue 4211; *Daily Courant*, April 4, 1706, Issue 1239, *London Gazette*, April 22-25, 1706, Issue 4221; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, May 2-4, 1706, Issue 1608.

<sup>177</sup> *London Gazette*, May 23-27, 1706, Issue 4230; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, May 23-25, 1706, Issue 1617; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, April 16-18, 1706, Issue 1601.

<sup>178</sup> *London Gazette*, June 17-20, 1706, Issue 4237.

possibility is that this was not a life-threatening illness for the prince and did not merit mention in the minds of eighteenth-century newspaper editors. Third, and I suggest the most likely, publishers had found that their readers were less interested in health than they had been, and no longer bothered to record minor or persistent ailments. From the materials in the Burney Collection, there seems to be a significant decline in the frequency of reports pertaining to royal and noble health beginning in 1705, at least compared with what existed in the early part of Anne's reign and during the second half of William III's reign. This silence may be explained by an increase in the number of ads taking up space in the newspapers since around 1712, when the Stamp Act went into effect and the physical size of newspapers increased, there is a noticeable uptick of references to the health of nobles, and the queen's, in the press. In particular regards to Anne's health, early in her reign the court was more open and her health seemed stable. By 1709, this changed as she withdrew from events and her health deteriorated. This undoubtedly made people more interested in the subject of her bodily constitution, which dovetails nicely with how health and medicine expanded as topics of public discourse during the reigns of the first three Hanoverians.

### **Attempts to Demystify a Sacred Queen**

Although there was a part of Anne's reign when her health was not a topic of great interest in the newspapers, comments about her sacred nature continued until her death in 1714. For instance, from January to June 1706, there are multiple addresses in the newspapers that refer to the queen as sacred. One comes from the leaders of Boston, in Lincoln, and begins by referring to "your Sacred Majesty" before adding "May the

Almighty Sovereign of the World, by whom Kings and Queens reign, continue to bless your Majesty's Person ... and add many years to your Life and Reign...."<sup>179</sup> In contrast to this sacred view, so often used to discuss Anne, the description provided by Sir John Clerk, a commissioner from Scotland sent to England to help secure the Treaty of Union, provides evidence of how demystification could occur. We know he had an audience with the queen in the spring/summer of 1706, and although he does not specifically date the event, it appears in his diary before July 22. This is the same period of time that was discussed above in relation to the prince's illness, during which the newspapers reported nothing involving the queen's poor health. Thus, one wonders, even fears, how typical the queen's appearance was when Clerk saw her the first time.

One day I had occasion to observe the Calamities which attend humane nature even in the greatest dignities of Life. Her majesty was labouring under a fit of the gout, and in extream pain and agony, and on this occasion every thing about her was much in the same disorder as about the meanest of her subjects. Her face, which was red and spotted, was rendered something frightful by her negligent dress, and the foot affected was tied up with a pultis and some nasty bandages. I was much affected at this sight, and the more *when she had occasion to mention her people of Scotland*, which she did frequently to the Duke [of Queensberry]. What are you, poor mean like Mortal, thought I, who talks in the style of a Sovereign? Nature seems to be inverted when a poor infirm Woman becomes one of the Rulers of the World, but, as Tacitus observes, it is not the first time that Women have governed in Britain, and indeed they have sometimes done this to better purpose than the Men.<sup>180</sup>

As Anne Somerset has observed, "...it is probable he [Clerk] did not even catch the Queen at her worst, for when most severely afflicted she hid herself from outsiders. Only

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<sup>179</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, June 27-29, 1706, Issue 1631; *Daily Courant*, June 13, 1706, Issue 1299.

<sup>180</sup> John M. Gray, ed., *Memoirs of the Life of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, Baronet, Baron of the Exchequer, Extracted by Himself from His own Journals 1676-1755* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1892), 62.



the most trusted servants were allowed near her at such times, as it caused her great ‘uneasiness ... to have a stranger about me when I have the gout and am forced to be helped to do everything.’”<sup>181</sup> Descriptive accounts of this type had no counterpart in the day’s print culture and it is clear that her subjects did not have the full image of what their queen labored under, although they knew she was often ill.

Even without Anne providing her subjects many chances to see the ailments afflicting her, changes occurred during her reign that helped demystify the monarchy. There was no one moment when the sacred veil was pulled back, but as Kevin Sharpe contends, during Anne’s reign there was “a move towards far less emphasis on the numinosity, the divine mystery, of regality.”<sup>182</sup> This shift is apparent in some of the pamphlet literature which appeared throughout the reign of the last Stuart. Rather than fully removing references about Anne’s sacred nature, authors focused on her as a person. In a sermon by Henry Lambe, he noted Anne “appears at once both Queen, and Friend.”<sup>183</sup> William Cockburn observed that Anne was “both Majestick and Pleasant.... She is very Accessable [*sic*], of an open and free Sincerity, conversing familiarly with Her Subjects....”<sup>184</sup> John Dunton’s satire, *A Cat May Look on a Queen*, contains a passage stating, “there is Majesty in her [Anne’s] very Face,” yet he later noted that “her

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<sup>181</sup> Somerset, 295.

<sup>182</sup> Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule*, 647. See also 648-677.

<sup>183</sup> Henry Lambe, *A Good Prince Never Forgotten. A Sermon Preach’d at St. Dunstan’s in the East, March the 8<sup>th</sup> 1708/9. Being the Day on which Her Majesty Began Her Happy Reign* (London: Brab Aylmer, 1709), 9.

<sup>184</sup> William Cockburn, *An Essay Upon the Propitious and Glorious Reign of Our Gracious Sovereign Anne...to which are subjoined the Characters of several Eminent Ministers of State* (London, 1710), 72.

*Body ... I find it to be no other than a Piece of Royal Clay which Nature has kneaded into solid Flesh ... and ... she is sifted from common Bran, but still she is but a Mortal Woman....*”<sup>185</sup> Rather than Anne’s gender being a limitation on discussing her body, Dunton frequently references biblical passages indicative of women as the weaker sex and goes so far as to state, “Our Sovereign Lady ... has many *Infirmities*, as she is a *Woman*.”<sup>186</sup> Dunton, Lambe, and Cockburn were not alone in discussing the physical (female) body of the queen, as Rachel Weil has convincingly shown that during Anne’s reign, political debates concerning the queen’s capabilities and her supposed pliability at the hands of her favorites and ministers focused so much on her femaleness, that the debates changed contemporary notions of gender.<sup>187</sup> However, even with the frequency of such discussions at the time, Dunton was aware that he was pushing the envelope of acceptable commentary. He notes throughout *A Cat May Look on a Queen*, that he is discussing a subject “whose next Step is Treason (or may be made so by an *Inuendo* [sic]).”<sup>188</sup>

The demystification occurring through pamphlet literature during Anne’s reign did not go uncontested, nor did it change the content of newspapers. As early as 1703, an

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<sup>185</sup> John Dunton, *A Cat May Look on a Queen: Or, A Satyr on Her Present Majesty*, 2nd ed. (London: John Mowhem, 1708), 11 and 34.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 16. For more information on the difficulties women faced due to their gender see: Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family, and Political Argument in England, 1680-1714* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) and Toni Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture, 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>187</sup> Weil, 236.

<sup>188</sup> Dunton, vi. Dunton wrote more than just satires. For an earlier, less treasonable work, see John Dunton, *The History of Living Men: or Characters of the Royal Family, the Ministers of State, and the Principal Natives of the Three Kingdoms* (London: E Mallet, 1702), 13: “Never was Majesty better temper’d; she [Anne] knows how to be Familiar, without making herself Cheap; and to Condescend, without Meanness.”

anonymous pamphlet directed at both houses of Parliament suggested banning plays and other material which rendered “the high *Dignity* and *Office* of a *King* or *Queen* very little and familiar to the Crowd.... Things of this Nature, tho’ they may seem *Innocent* and *Ludicrous*, by constant Use make the Noble *Dignity* of a *Monarch* seem a Trifle in the eyes of the *Populace*.”<sup>189</sup> On the musical side, George Frideric Handel and Ambrose Philip’s “Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne” in 1713, elevated the queen’s sacred nature with stanzas including: “Kind Health descend on downy wings/ angels conduct her on the way/ T’our glorious Queen her life she brings/ and swells our joys upon the day.”<sup>190</sup> Sir William Dawes, in a sermon before Anne in November 1706, advised the rest of his listeners that they not “be rash with your mouths” when discussing “the Characters of our Governours, [and] the Conduct of our Superiors” which are “nice and Sacred Subjects.”<sup>191</sup> And for those individuals who did not heed the message of the sermon, there was someone keeping an eye on the works produced, as in July 1712 when Lord Bolingbrook intended “to imploy some diligent and active person, as Messenger of the Press, to detect as far as may be the Open Impudent and Scandalous practices of the Present Libellors against the Queen and Ministry.”<sup>192</sup> The Licensing Act lapsed in 1695,

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<sup>189</sup> *Some Expedites Without which England Cannot be Happy. Humbly Offer’d to the Consideration of Both Houses of Parliament* (London: J. How, 1703), 18.

<sup>190</sup> George Frideric Handel and Ambrose Philips, “Birthday Ode for Queen Anne (1713),” Choralwiki, [http://www2.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Birthday\\_Ode\\_for\\_Queen\\_Anne\\_%28George\\_Frideric\\_Handel%29](http://www2.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Birthday_Ode_for_Queen_Anne_%28George_Frideric_Handel%29) (accessed February 2, 2014).

<sup>191</sup> William Dawes, *The Danger of Talking Much, and Wisdom of the Contrary. A Sermon Preach’d before the Queen, Novemb. 1706 at Saint James’s*, 2nd ed. (London: H. Hills, 1707), 16.

<sup>192</sup> Maris, 1:308.

but there were still ministry-paid individuals reading through published works, looking for inappropriate comments which merited prosecution.

The individuals who wrote works that might have demystified the sacred subject of monarchy were aware of the watchful eye of the ministry. In 1713, Daniel Defoe penned one of the most objectionable pamphlets to appear during Anne's reign. *An Answer to a Question That No body Thinks of, viz. But What if the QUEEN Should Die?* was not actually an attack on Queen Anne or her body. In the final years of her reign, without an heir, Defoe sketched how much depended on her life, how things would change for the worse if she died suddenly, and the need to address these concerns immediately. He foresaw that from his work "possibly Cavils may Rise ... that this is a Question unfit to be asked...."<sup>193</sup> Unfortunately for Defoe, even though he did not discuss the queen's health in detail, his words rubbed the supporters of sacred Anne and her ministers the wrong way. He was prosecuted for supporting the Pretender and petitioned Anne, claiming that he was innocent of this charge and that his work was "turned to a Meaning quite different From ye Intention of the Author." He asked for clemency and a "Free Pardon," which he appears to have received, although this may have been more the work of his patron, the Earl of Oxford, rather than the queen's intervention.<sup>194</sup> In the next year, as Anne's body and health deteriorated, although she remained sacred enough that this decline was not openly discussed in the newspapers, the queen heard more pointed

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<sup>193</sup> Daniel Defoe, *An Answer to a Question that No body Thinks of, viz., But what if the Queen should Die?* (London, J. Baker, 1713), 37.

<sup>194</sup> State Papers, Secretaries of State, Vol. 37 Letters and Papers, 1704 May-Anne (1714 Aug 10), 34/37, f. 205: Petition of Daniel Defoe to the Queen, November[?] 1713.

questions about the succession. This issue increased as a topic of conversation since the death of her husband in 1708 confirmed she would never produce an heir.

After suffering from so many lung problems related to his asthma, on October 23, 1708 Prince George became quite ill with the coughing of blood and what a later newspaper would classify as “an increase of the coma, or Sleepiness, with an Addition of Convulsive Motions of the Tendents....”<sup>195</sup> Anne tended to her husband dutifully “with such care and concern, that she was looked on very deservedly, as a pattern in this respect.”<sup>196</sup> Nevertheless, the newspapers remained silent about his condition until after he had already died. At that point, there were full descriptions of the ailments suffered by George, including that “His Royal Highness had been troubled for many Years with a constant difficulty of Breathing, and sometimes with spitting of Blood, which often endangered his Life.”<sup>197</sup> Quickly, the public’s concern turned to his widow, Queen Anne, and how she would bear this turn of fate, similar to how people had worried about William III after Mary II died. For Anne, the *Observer* stated, “I doubt not ... but Vows are constantly made to Heaven for her Majesty’s Support under this heavy Affliction....”<sup>198</sup> The draft of an address sent from the city of Chester to the queen upon the death of Prince George included the passage, “And we beseech yor Maty ... to moderate yor greif [*sic*] that it may not endanger the health of your sacred person upon

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<sup>195</sup> *London Gazette*, October 28-November 1, 1708, Issue 4484.

<sup>196</sup> Burnet, 4:246.

<sup>197</sup> *London Gazette*, October 28-November 1, 1708, Issue 4484. Also see *Observer*, October 27-30, 1708, Issue 74; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, October 28-30, 1708, Issue 1670; *Daily Courant*, October 29, 1708, Issue 2088.

<sup>198</sup> *Observer*, October 27-30, Issue 74.

whose safety the present + future happiness of yor subjects and the deliverance of Europe from French tyranny do most evidently depend.”<sup>199</sup> Once again, Anne’s strength carried her through a dark time, although Bucholz has discussed how far the queen withdrew herself from social and ceremonial life after her husband’s death.<sup>200</sup> This removal also helped demystify the queen.

### **Succession Concerns and Anne’s Health**

This seclusion continued until the last year and a half of her reign when, because of her health, the political uncertainty surrounding the succession, and the importance of her living until the completion of the Peace of Utrecht, the ministry made a big deal of the few occasions she was able to appear in public. The newspapers reported more frequently on her activities, with some writers attempting to allay fears about her health while other authors strove to undermine public opinion. July 1713 through August 1714 became the zenith of party tension and the height of the periodical essay.<sup>201</sup> As a result of this environment, the queen’s recovery from illness and ability to stay alive were fodder for the Whig and Tory authors ready to extend their party’s views to the masses. The Whigs tended to claim that Anne was near death, hoping to undermine her ministers and pave the way for the Hanoverian succession. On the other hand, the Tories claimed that Anne was healthy, knowing this would help support Oxford’s efforts in Parliament, while the Jacobite-leaning segment of the party hoped to give themselves more time to

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<sup>199</sup> Draft of an address to Queen Anne upon the Death of Prince George, Cheshire Archives, ZAF 49 a/11.

<sup>200</sup> Bucholz, *Augustan Court*, 220-1.

<sup>201</sup> For an example of how this party tension was not contained within Great Britain, but also spread to ambassadors and those living abroad, see H.M.C., *Portland V*, 307-8.

negotiate the return of the Old Pretender to the English throne. However, even in the midst of all the political chaos and the challenges of demystification in the pamphlet literature, the sanctity and dignity of the royal body remained almost fully intact in Parliament, as there were no official inquiries into Anne's clearly failing health.

In July 1713, Anne's gout was so severe that she was prevented from attending St. Paul's Cathedral during the thanksgiving proclaimed to celebrate the Peace of Utrecht. But by September, she was able to walk for the first time in a long while, only needing to hold the arm of the Duke of Shrewsbury. On December 18, her health had improved to the point that the Jacobite Earl of Mar noted "the Queen never lookt better than she now does since she came to the Crown."<sup>202</sup> With word that the queen was doing so well spreading throughout the town, her ministers, courtiers, and subjects were surprised when on December 24, 1713 Anne suffered fever, chills, and an intense pain in her thigh. This concern intensified until December 29, with many people fearing that the monarch had died. For five days after Anne's fit, the newspapers remained completely silent on the matter, including the official *London Gazette*.<sup>203</sup>

The Tory *Post Boy* did not mention the medical situation until its issue of December 29-31 when it claimed, "Her Majesty ... [is] perfectly recover'd of Her late Indisposition."<sup>204</sup> The Whig *The Daily Courant*, which produced newspaper issues on December 24, 26, 28-31, never mentioned the queen's illness or that she was still alive.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> H.M.C., *Fourteenth Report, Appendix III*, 225.

<sup>203</sup> *London Gazette*, December 22-26, 1713, Issue 5184.

<sup>204</sup> *Post Boy*, December 29-31, 1713, Issue 2909.

In keeping with the type of coverage the newspapers gave royal health concerns in both William's reign and early in Anne's, the *London Gazette* of December 26-29 observed, "On Thursday the 24th, the Queen was taken with an Ague, of which She has had Two Fits: The Second was much shorter than the First. Her Majesty having us'd the proper Remedies, has rested extreamly[sic] well last Night, and is now, God be prais'd, as well as can be expected."<sup>206</sup> Although the paper does not explicitly state that the queen had recovered, the first appearance of a report involving her health only occurred once she was on the mend, which is true of all the other health-related instances from her reign. Similar, overly optimistic accounts of what had happened appeared in the *British Mercury*, another issue of the *London Gazette*, and an issue of the *Post Boy*.<sup>207</sup> Of particular note is the account in the *London Gazette*, dated January 1, which read, "Her Majesty, God be prais'd, has had no return of Her Ague since Sunday last. She rests every Night so well, and recovers so fast, that it is not doubted but She will soon be restored to a perfect state of Health."<sup>208</sup> Considering that this was the official newspapers, the hopeful optimism of the editor is not surprising.

Those connected to the ministry, as opposed to the general public reading newspapers publishing old information, were able to write credible, up-to-the-minute reports to one another about the queen's health. One example comes from the

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<sup>205</sup> This is not as surprising as it may seem. The *Daily Courant* usually only included 1-2 lines of domestic news, which was almost always focused on shipping news or stock prices. Still, one thinks that a Whig publication would deviate from its standard format to at least mention Anne's illness.

<sup>206</sup> *London Gazette*, December 26-29, 1713, Issue 5185.

<sup>207</sup> *British Mercury*, December 23-30, 1713, Issue 443; *London Gazette*, December 29, 1713-January 2, 1714, Issue 5186; *Post Boy*, December 29-31, 1713, Issue 2909.

<sup>208</sup> *London Gazette*, December 29, 1713-January 2, 1714, Issue 5186.



correspondence between Viscount Bolingbroke and the Earl of Oxford on December 24, 1713. It begins, “I arrive here [Windsor] this moment and find our good mistress extremely ill. Her case you will have particularly from Dr. Arbuthnot. Her symptoms are the same as in her last ague, but stronger and more severe. God in his mercy to these kingdoms preserve her. Let us see you here without delay.”<sup>209</sup> This type of clear and descriptive account was not available for the majority of society, leaving the queen’s subjects to rely on rumor for their information.<sup>210</sup> An example of the realities of the situation for most of the citizenry is found in a letter from Jane Lowther, living in London, to her brother James Lowther, an MP from Cumberland, then residing in Whitehaven because Parliament was not in session. Lowther’s class and location gave her access to some court information, as well as the more wide-spread rumors. The letter, dated December 29 read:

I writ to you in a fright last Saturday night, but was in a much worse a Sunday, when it was al over ye town yt the Qun. was dead &c she had been taken extraordinarily ill the Thursday before, and Lady Freshville satt [*sic*] up almost two night, this will they say bring her to Town, as soon as tis safe for her, but you may Judge not a barren time of news it is now this was so long a coming 20 Miles I sent Just now to Captn Ferrers and he heard at St James’s Coffee House at noon yt ye Qun had a good night. Cousen Hannah writ to Mall she had been so frightened for ye Qu, she had made her self sick.<sup>211</sup>

The Lowthers were not the only ones hearing rumors, many of which were spread by the Whigs, who were eagerly awaiting the chance for the Hanoverians to take over the throne

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<sup>209</sup> H.M.C., *Portland V*, 374.

<sup>210</sup> For a discussion of the role that gossip played in bridging the public versus private divide during the reign of Queen Anne, see Nicola Parsons, *Reading Gossip in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>211</sup> Jane Lowther to James Lowther, December 29, 1713, Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle Headquarters, D LONS W2/3/13.

so that they could become the majority party in Parliament. In a letter to the Earl of Oxford, on December 30, Daniel Defoe provides some clarity on just how extreme the situation in the public sphere had become. Not only was false word of mouth flying around, but also accounts in print. Defoe wrote angrily:

It has been with amazement that I have observed these men on the late surprise of her Majesty's indisposition, and it fills every honest faithful subject of her Majesty's with indignation to see these men brighten their faces and betray a secret satisfaction at the appearance of that danger which every good man trembled at, and now how do they feign a joy at her Majesty's recovery, which anyone may see is rather a visible disappointment to them.<sup>212</sup>

As the calendar turned to January 1714, the situation began to stabilize, as the queen recovered slowly. It was hardly a linear recovery, as the accounts left by her physicians Sir John Shadwell, Sir David Hamilton, and Dr. John Arbuthnot show.<sup>213</sup> With her improvement and her proclamation proroguing Parliament until February 16, 1714, people attempted to make sense of what occurred in the immediate aftermath of the queen's fit of ague on Christmas Eve.<sup>214</sup> It did not help that the newspapers for most of January provided no news on the queen's recovery, indirectly granting credibility to every whisper that she was still ill. One of the rumors was that Anne was recovering, as seen in a January 16, 1714 letter from Sir Thomas Cave, Third Baronet of Stanford and an MP, to John Verney, First Viscount Fermanagh and an MP: "I am truly sorry the Poor Queen has been so ill, & as glad that she amends, especially from the reflections of the ill

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<sup>212</sup> H.M.C., *Portland V*, 376.

<sup>213</sup> Shadwell: "Medical Cases and Receipts: Account of Anne's Final Illness," British Library, Sloane MS 4034, f. 44-46; Hamilton: Philip Roberts, ed., *The Diary of Sir David Hamilton 1709-1714* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Arbuthnot: George Aitken, *The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892).

<sup>214</sup> *London Gazette*, January 5-9, 1714, Issue 5188.

Consequences of her Death & what Confusion it must have created, while affairs are so unsettled.”<sup>215</sup> On the other hand, Jane Lowther writing to her brother James, provides insight into some of the negative rumors. On January 21, she wrote:

As to ye grt Lady whose health you enquire after, tis ye hardest thing to know in ye world. Tis often positively sd at ye same time, yt she is very ill, and very wel, and tis almost Tr—son to say the 1<sup>st</sup> tho some silly ordinary folks believe her dead which is very ridiculous, but by ye best acct I have she is in a Dangerous condition.<sup>216</sup>

Two days later, Abigail Lady Masham wrote to the Earl of Oxford with an up-to-the-moment account of what was taking place at Windsor. Her assessment was that “I do not think the Queen so well as she was when you saw her last.”<sup>217</sup> Although silent on her health, the newspapers contained reports of Queen Anne having private audiences with a variety of ambassadors and envoys which allowed the public to take comfort in the fact that she was well enough to meet people and conduct some business.<sup>218</sup> This is similar to the approach we saw the newspapers take when William III was ill.

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<sup>215</sup> Maris, 1:244. Also see 1:291 for a letter in the collection that Ralph Palmer wrote to Ralph Verney on January 1, 1714: “The Queen, God be praised, is much better, fine and well, and will be speedily at St. James’s, her illness began with a Colick Fit, and turned to an Ague, but I cannot learn she has had above two Fits.” This was an overly optimistic account of Anne’s recovery.

<sup>216</sup> Jane Lowther to James Lowther, January 21, 1714, Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle Headquarters, D LONS W2/3/14. Perhaps those who spoke about the queen as dead were Whigs. See F. Elbrington Ball, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.* (London: G. Bell and Sons, LTD, 1910), 2:124: Swift to Archdeacon Walls, February 2, 1714: “Few of the Whigs will allow the Queen to be alive, or at best that she can live a month.”

<sup>217</sup> H.M.C., *Portland V*, 381.

<sup>218</sup> *Post Boy*, January 12-14, 1714, Issue 2915; *London Gazette*, January 23-26, 1714, Issue 5193. For the book I hope to see what these ambassadors and envoys sent in their dispatches to their respective monarchs/leaders.

### Periodical Essays and Anne's Worst Illness

A more interesting and potentially informative way of gaining news was to read the periodical essays, a literary development of Anne's reign. More editorial than pure news reporting, these essays included the pro-Whig publications the *Englishman* and the *Patriot*, while they were countered by the pro-Tory *Examiner*. The main point of contention, if anything can be distilled from the literary chaos, was the issue of the succession. For years, the Hanoverians and Whigs had wanted to bring over a representative of that German house, so that when the queen died, there would be a smooth transition. This idea was anathema to Anne and she bitterly, and successfully, fought off all demands to do so throughout her reign. Her opposition was known and reported in the press, including letters she penned to both Sophia and her grandson, George August, the Duke of Cambridge.<sup>219</sup> In reality, one of the most objectionable comments about Anne's health during the entirety of her reign occurred during a parliamentary debate about bringing over a Hanoverian. Back in November 1705, before reporting on parliamentary debates in the press was legal, Lord Haversham, a High Tory, stated:

Is there any man, my Lords, who doubts, that if the duke of Gloucester had been alive, her majesty had not been more secure than she is? We cannot think of that misfortune without the greatest grief; but yet we are not to neglect our own safety; and though a successor not the child of the prince, yet is he the child of the queen and the people.—Besides, my lords, the heats and differences which are amongst us make it very necessary that we should have the presumptive heir residing here, the duty and respect we pay her majesty, and the authority of the law, can hardly keep us in

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<sup>219</sup> *Post Boy*, July 1-3, 1714, Issue 2988. The best account of these final months and all the questions surrounding the succession can be found in Gregg, 374-395.

peace and union amongst ourselves at present; what then may we not fear when these bonds shall ever happen to be broke?<sup>220</sup>

The comment about the dead Duke of Gloucester was viewed as unwarranted, but even more outlandish was the follow-up view presented by the Duke of Buckingham. He stated “...the queen might live till she did not know what she did, and be like a child in the hands of others, and a great deal to that effect.”<sup>221</sup> Despite Buckingham’s and Haversham’s arguments, they ultimately were unsuccessful in bringing a Hanoverian over before Anne’s death.

The difference between 1705 and the months of 1714 leading up to Anne’s death in August was that the type of repugnant comment made by Haversham directed at the queen’s body was now made, although still subtly, in the periodical essays like the *Englishman* and the *Examiner*. In one example, the *Examiner* of January 8-11, 1714 argued:

Consider how Dear and Inestimable a Blessing that Sacred Life is to us and to all *Europe*, how necessary towards confirming and securing our Repose and Safety, and how much depends upon the present *Crisis*, now that Peace is about to be made in *Germany* and the *North*, *Religion* and *Trade* to be settled upon immoveable Foundations, the Damages sustain’d by *Faction* to be repair’d, a *Parliament* to meet that must perfect our Happiness, and the intestine Enemy to be so far reduc’d, as never to hurt us more, there is no doubt but every Body by this time, sees to the Ends and Design of Spiriting-up this accursed Rumour [that Anne was dead], and spreading it abroad at a very great Expence.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> William Cobbett, ed., *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803* (London: T.C. Hansard, 1810), 6:459-60. The explanation for why a High Tory supported a position that sounded so whiggish was two fold and can be found on Gregg, 210-211. First, it seems that the Tories sought to disrupt negotiations between the English and Hanoverian courts. Second, the references to bringing over the successor were designed to “irritate the queen personally.”

<sup>221</sup> Cobbett, 6:470-1.

<sup>222</sup> *Examiner or Remarks upon Papers and Occurrences*, January 8-11, 1714, Issue 13.

While keeping in mind the language from the Tory side that still referred to Queen Anne as sacred, the response from the Whig *Englishman* also focused on the monarch's health, but aimed its barrage against the Tories, claiming that they were guilty of spreading rumors about Anne dying, since they wanted to bring in the Pretender.<sup>223</sup> Richard Steele, the author of the *Englishman*, wrote:

The Subject of his Queen's Indisposition is the last Occasion that a Man of any Religion, or good Breeding, would have taken to introduce his [the author of the *Examiner*] Raillery against his Opposers [*sic*]. If there are Men who rejoyce at the Incident he mentions, it is no Instance of Reproach to the Queen to report the Malevolence of any of Her Subjects.... His Ribbaldry of printing the Words, *Young Queen, illustrious Successor,* and *new Monarch*, are unsufferably licentious; for as Men of the best Discerning cannot find out Wit in what he frequently intends for such, much more may it be expected that the common People should take what he says literally[*sic*], and act accordingly. Scandals against the Government are not to be treated like those against private Persons, nor are we to wait till Detriments arise from false Reports relating to our Sovereign, before they become punishable by Law. I insist upon it, that this Author has reported the Queen's Departure out of this Life falsely and impertinently, I will not say maliciously; but the Consequences of it might have had as ill Effects as if they had flowed from malice also in him who spread the Report.<sup>224</sup>

This passage shows how the health and body of the queen were illicit subjects, and serves as a reminder that spreading false news about the monarch was punishable by law. The author's desire to prosecute individuals disseminating false information about Anne's health, which was in accordance with the provisions of the Slandorous Reports Act of 1378, was considerably different from what happened under the Hanoverians, where, as

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<sup>223</sup> We already saw with Defoe's pamphlet, *An Answer to A Question no body thinks to Ask*, that association with the Pretender or the belief that a work supported his claim led to the author's prosecution.

<sup>224</sup> *Englishman*, January 9-12, 1714, Issue XLIII. The *Examiner or Remarks upon Papers and Occurrences* issue that Steele is decrying is from January 4-8, 1714, Issue 12.

we will see in the next chapter, such rumors and falsities were excused as innocent mistakes.

The type of partisan bickering noted above continued in the periodical essays through the end of Anne's reign, although neither side dared discuss in detail the queen's health.<sup>225</sup> Even as Parliament opened on February 16 without Anne in attendance, the queen's ministers worked feverishly to create a propaganda blitz to convince everyone that she was healthy. The Tory *Post Boy* of February 11-13, 1714 included the report from Windsor that "the Queen went in a Chair to take the Air in Her little Park, and is as well, we bless God, as ever we saw Her; next Tuesday, Her Majesty goes to Hampton-Court; and after a Stay of a Day or two sets out from thence to Her Royal Palace at St James's."<sup>226</sup> With such positive reports being printed, one might think that the vitriol in the press would have lessened, especially after Anne addressed both houses of Parliament on March 2, where she stressed her desire to stop "Seditious Papers and Factious

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<sup>225</sup> However, even though the authors did not directly discuss the queen's health, obviously some politicians were highly offended at what appeared in print and punishments were handed down. In particular, both Jonathan Swift and Richard Steele, prominent writers for the Tories and Whigs respectively, were brought before the Commons because of works they penned during this time. Steele was even expelled from his seat in the Commons because of his admitted authorship of a few works. For more details on these events, see Cobbett, ed., 6:1256-1325. Daniel Defoe was outraged by the writing in the Whig *Flying Post* of March 11, 1714, Issue 3462 about which he wrote to the Earl of Oxford. See H.M.C., *Portland V*, 395-6: "I am far from prompting justice, but no faithful subject can be satisfied to see justice thus affronted, and I move your Lordship the rather because I see this as a forerunner of greater insults under the same protection. I hear the whole town cry out of this insolence as the most unparalleled affront to the person and honour of her Majesty that ever subject was permitted unpunished to be guilty of." Unfortunately, I cannot find a copy of this issue to see what it actually says. Defoe was not alone in his disgust with the Whigs during this time as seen in Maris, 1:244-5: Sir Thomas Cave, Third Baronet of Stanford and an MP, wrote to John Verney, First Viscount Fermanagh, on January 16, 1714 that "No doubt the Wgs. were very uppish during her Indisposition, & I dare say the Torys as much dijected, of which they had Sufficient reason."

<sup>226</sup> *Post Boy*, February 11-13, 1714, Issue 2928. Other examples can be seen in: *British Mercury*, February 10-17, 1714, Issue 450; *Post Boy*, February 6-9, 1714, Issue 2926; *London Gazette*, February 6-9, 1714, Issue 5197; *Post Boy*, February 4-6, 1714, Issue 2925; *Post Boy*, February 2-4, 1714, Issue 2924; *London Gazette*, February 2-6, 1714, Issue 5196. Bucholz has addressed this point in greater detail in *Augustan Court*, 223-224.

Rumours” and clarified that “There are some, who are arrived to that height of malice, as to insinuate that the Protestant Succession in the House of Hanover is in danger under my government.-Those who go about thus to distract the minds of men with imaginary dangers, can only mean to disturb the present tranquillity [*sic*], and bring real mischief upon us.”<sup>227</sup> Despite Anne’s pleas, the verbal sparring between the two parties continued.

With a reference to “present” tranquility in her speech, one has to assume that Anne was not able to keep up with the news as well as she had before her ague at the end of 1713. The print culture of early 1714 teemed with hostility.<sup>228</sup> Yet, in all of those attacks, it may come as a surprise that the Whig *Patriot* still posed a question that elevated the queen’s status: “What *Whig* is there among us who would not contend to the last Drop of his Blood to preserve Her Sacred Majesty on the Throne, and on her Demise without Issue to fill it with the next Heir in the House of *Hanover*?”<sup>229</sup> A bit of calm and rational thought also emerged from the Tory *Examiner* during this political storm:

Surely it is no Presumption to hope, that a Way will be found to deliver us from the real Evil of false Alarms for the Future; and to convince us, that the greatest Loss that can happen to us, and which we trust in God, is at a vast distance from us, will be far from accomplishing our Ruin: So that all

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<sup>227</sup> Cobbett, ed., 6:1257. For accounts of this speech in the newspapers, see *British Mercury*, February 24-March 3, 1714, Issue 452; *London Gazette*, March 2-6, 1714, Issue 5204; *Post Boy*, March 2-4, 1714, Issue 2936.

<sup>228</sup> For but the tip of the iceberg, see Richard Steele, *The Crisis Or, A Discourse Representing, From the most Authentick Records, The just Causes of the late Happy Revolution* (London: Sam Buckely, 1714); Jonathan Swift, *The Publick Spirit of the Whigs, Set Forth in their Generous Encouragement of the Author of The Crisis* (London: T. Cole, 1714); Delariviere Manley, *A Modest Enquiry into the Reasons of the Joy Expressed by a Certain Sett of People, Upon the Spreading of a Report of Her Majesty’s Death* (London: John Morphew, 1714). Manley began her essay on page 2: “That this Enquiry is made by a Private Person, and not by Her Majesty’s Attorney-General; and that such notorious Offenders have met only with an Expostulation instead of an Indictment, will at once be an everlasting Proof of the Lenity of the Government, and of the unprovok’d and groundless Barbarity of such a Proceeding.”

<sup>229</sup> *Patriot*, March 26-29, 1714, Issue III.



the Joy, that was lately seen in the Faces of our Enemies, shall appear to be as Foolish and Unreasonable, as it was Infamous and Detestable.<sup>230</sup>

In all of the confusion and concern that existed in the last eight months of Queen Anne's reign, it is interesting to think about all the things that could have been done differently to stop the false alarms the *Examiner* author, at this time William Oldisworth, bemoaned. If Parliament had so desired, once the session opened in February, the MPs could have demanded to interview the queen's physicians to find out the real story of what was going on.<sup>231</sup> Or they could have forced Anne to accept the future George I residing in England while the queen still lived.<sup>232</sup> Yet, in the debates of the time, there is no indication that this type of thought ever received any real traction. The sacred queen on the throne, when she spoke to them on March 2, reminded the Lords, "You, who are nearest to the throne, will first of all my subjects feel the evil consequences of any diminution of the regal dignity."<sup>233</sup> Despite the challenges posed to her mystification by her health, and individuals and works questioning her elevated position, Anne remained a sacred Stuart. All the efforts to keep English monarchs elevated and viewed as having

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<sup>230</sup> *Examiner or Remarks Upon Papers and Occurrences*, February 15-19, 1714, Issue 24.

<sup>231</sup> They might still not have gotten a clear answer because at least some of Anne's physicians had a policy of spreading false health reports to protect her interests. For more information on this, see chapter 5 below. The lack of interest in finding out about her health and making future plans struck Jonathan Swift as negligent. See Bell, 2:137: May 18, 1714 Swift to the Earl of Peterborough: "The Queen is pretty well at present, but the least disorder she has puts all in alarm; and when it is over we act as if she were immortal. Neither is it possible to persuade people to make any preparations against an evil day."

<sup>232</sup> Parliament was only in session from February 16 to July 9 before it was prorogued until August 10, 1714. The only inkling that Parliament might have put itself into uncharted territories is a passing reference in a letter located at the Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle Headquarters. Mr. Newman to James Lowther, December 29, 1713, Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle Headquarters, D LONS W2/3/13. Mr. Newman, writing from Whitehall, observed that "if the Qn indisposition continues tis conjectur'd by some ye the Parliament will sit at ye next adjournment of wch you will have notice by Proclamation. But others think the ferment in Ireland is too great, to trust a British Parliament to sit at ye same time for fear they shd Copy after them."

<sup>233</sup> Cobbett, ed., 6:1259.

some level of divine favor had been successful, at least for the time being. In the anonymous pamphlet titled, *A Vindication of the Constitution of the English Monarchy and the Just Rights of the People*, there was nothing to suggest that the queen's subjects felt they had a right to inquire into sacred Anne's health.<sup>234</sup> Even in the final months of her life, the newspapers noted the "sincere Loyalty to your [Anne's] Sacred Person and Government."<sup>235</sup> In the end, with a final chance to comment on the queen's health, with her on her deathbed, the neutral *Post Man and Historical Account* of July 29-31, 1714 stated, "Yesterday [July 30] Morning the Queen was taken very Ill, but last Night, God Almighty be praised, Her Majesty was much Better, to the great Joy of Her good Subjects."<sup>236</sup> The report on the sovereign's illness was vague and referred to her as having recovered to some degree, continuing the tradition of the public sphere's minimalistic coverage of the health of the last three divinely-supported monarchs.<sup>237</sup> This type of respect for a sacred body died with Anne. As Hannah Smith and others have shown, the Hanoverians failed to adopt the model of monarchy laid out by their

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<sup>234</sup> *A Vindication of the Constitution of the English Monarchy, and the Just Rights of the People* (London: 1703).

<sup>235</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, July 27-29, 1714, Issue 3521; *Post Boy*, March 9-11, 1714, Issue 2939; *Post Boy*, May 20-22, 1714, Issue 2970.

<sup>236</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, July 29-31, 1714, Issue 11050.

<sup>237</sup> Anne's final illness was discussed more openly in the newspapers after her death. From the *London Gazette* of July 31-August 3, 1714, Issue 5247: "Her Majesty complain'd on Thursday last of a Pain in Her Head: The next Day She was seized with Convulsion Fits, and for some time lost the use of Her Speech and Senses, which, tho' She afterwards recovered upon the Application of proper Remedies, She continued in a very weak and languishing Condition till She expired." Also see *Post Boy*, July 31-August 3, 1714, Issue 3001; *Daily Courant*, August 2, 1714, Issue 3985; *Flying Post or The Post Master*, July 31-August 3, 1714, Issue 3523. However, no autopsy report was ever published and the respect given to Anne extended into her dissection. See Hans Sloane, "Collection of Loose Papers and Letters," British Library, Sloane MS 3984. f 275r: Dr. Hans Sloane noted that the physicians did not inspect her corpse aside from "what was absolutely necessary for embalming the body."

predecessors. As a result, they became less sacred and were further demystified. Such changes are evident in how the newspapers more openly reported on the health and bodies of the first Hanoverians and their royal families.

CHAPTER THREE  
ENLIGHTENED MONARCHY, ACCESSIBLE MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE,  
AND HEALTH POLITICS

I might judge of his [George II's] mind by his actions, almost as a physician judges of the internal by the external parts of the body. But ... Kings ... are not easily penetrated. The blaze of majesty dazzles [*sic*] our sight, so that we can scarce discern the man that is concealed under it.<sup>1</sup>

*Vanity* is the just Inscription on all human Happiness; and the Reflexion of the inspir'd Writer on the natural Frailty of Princes, ought for ever to correct those tow'ring and splendid Expectations, which we form from their Virtue and Wisdom; *I have said ye are Gods, and all of ye Children of the most high, but ye shall die like Men, and fall like one of the People.*<sup>2</sup>

The presence of a large royal family, who endured their share of ailments that demonstrated their natural frailty more than their blinding majesty, helped facilitate the continued demystification of English monarchs after the Hanoverian Succession in 1714. Changes occurred during the reigns of the first two Georges which sped up the process of demystification as the monarch shifted from a sacred ruler to an enlightened King-in-Parliament. Part of this transformation occurred through an increase in reportage on the royal family, including more in-depth accounts of their health and illnesses. This increased coverage resulted from an expanded number of periodicals, fewer legal

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<sup>1</sup> William Hooper, trans., *Letters of Baron Bielfeld, Secretary of Legation to the King of Prussia; Preceptor to Prince Ferdinand; Chancellor of the Universitys in the Dominions of His Prussian Majesty, F.R.A.B. &c. Author of the Political Institutes* (London: Robinson and Roberts, 1740), 4:8.

<sup>2</sup> *London Journal*, June 17, 1727, Issue 411.

restrictions, and a decreased fear of prosecution for libelous, seditious, and treasonable publications. Additionally, beginning in the 1730s, health and medicine in general became popular topics. As details about the general nature of health and illness increased in the public sphere, so too did discussions of the monarch's health and body, especially as George I and George II were two of the oldest kings to ever sit on the throne. These discussions of royal health in the public sphere did not increase in a linear fashion throughout the reigns. as fears of Jacobite invasions led to some periods of restrained publishing, while other periods involved internal party squabbles which exploited the monarch's health for political gain.

### **Connecting the Dots: Monarchy, Medicine, and the Media**

Part of what helps explain the differences in the press' coverage of royal health between the reigns of the Stuarts and the first two Hanoverians was the declining view that the monarch was sacred or divinely appointed. Admittedly, this belief, even after the role Parliament played in bringing George I to the throne, did not suddenly disappear. As J.C.D. Clark has shown, many pamphlets and sermons embraced this sacred and mystical belief of kingship, and the idea of divine right monarchy retained some of its former hold.<sup>3</sup> However, the addresses directed to George I and George II show a noticeable decline in the usage of the term "Sacred body," and its replacement with the term "royal body."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially 105-123.

<sup>4</sup> I have tracked this change on a small scale between 1688 and 1789. There is a sizeable decline in the usage of "Sacred" and "sacred." I plan to do a quantitative analysis of ~12,000 addresses (10 per month for a century, based on those included in the *London Gazette*) when I turn this dissertation into a book.

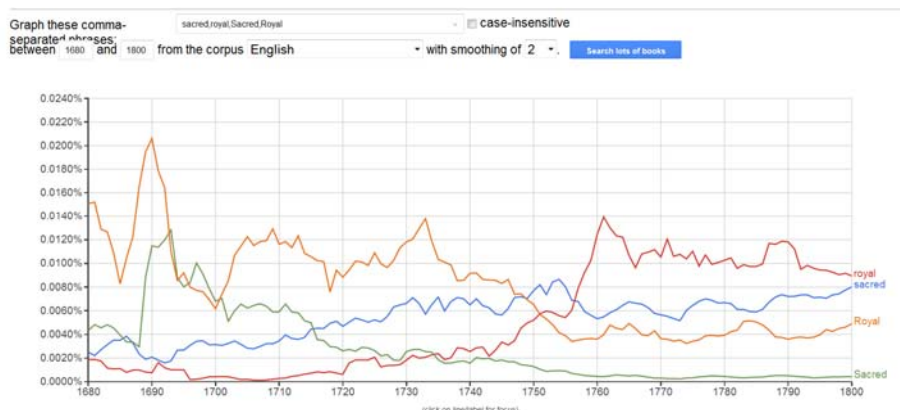


Figure 3. An Ngram Viewer showing the changes in the use of the terms “sacred,” “Sacred,” “royal,” and “Royal” from 1680 to 1800 in all the digitized works included in Google Books. While newspapers are not included in Google Books, the language used in periodicals and books were similar. Note the rapid decline in the use of the term “Sacred” as the term “royal” increased at an equally rapid rate.

On top of changes to sacral beliefs, with the arrival of the Hanoverians, the situation of the royal family changed significantly from that of their predecessors as there were now multiple heirs. George II was an active Prince of Wales before his accession and the newspapers frequently reported on his activities. The same was true once he became king and his son, Frederick, arrived from Hanover. The activities of the royal family had been of interest while Anne was on the throne but this coverage grew after the 1712 Stamp Act had increased the size of newspapers from four pages to six pages. By that point, there was only Anne, but reports of her activities, along with those of the nobility, began to appear more frequently, a trend that continued into the 1720s. With the passage of the 1725 Stamp Act, most newspapers returned to four pages but interest in the persons and activities of the nobility and royal family remained high, which meant that these topics continued to receive significant coverage even in the smaller newspapers.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For more on this interest in and reportage of the movements and actions of the royal family and nobility see Matthew Kilburn, “Royalty and Public in Britain: 1714-1789” (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1997); Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge

Coupled with this increase in royal and noble coverage was the proliferation of reports focused on health and body issues. Accounts submitted by readers, editorials, advice columns, and newspaper ads all addressed these concerns. As Roy Porter has showed, this interest in the broadly defined “medical” field intersected with an interest in the activities of the upper levels of society, further fanning the flames whenever the health of members of the royal family was involved. Even aspects of the body as simple as the Prince of Wales’ haircut received coverage in the press.<sup>6</sup> Although London and domestic news generated fewer reports than foreign affairs, the royal family, including their health and their actions “were considered part of the business of government which was the principal domestic interest of early eighteenth-century news coverage.”<sup>7</sup> This is in contrast to Linda Colley’s claim that under the first two Hanoverians newspaper and periodical reports “remained patchy and impersonal.”<sup>8</sup> This chapter provides a revision to her claim by showing how newspapers and periodicals between 1714 and 1760 slowly and irregularly began to provide more extensive details about the health and body of the

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University Press, 2006), 80-81; Michael Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole: A Study of the Origins of the Modern English Press* (London: Associated University Presses, 1987), 168-169. One of the best examples of how acceptable it became to discuss the health of leading figures is the numerous pamphlets that appeared after the death of Sir Robert Walpole. For an overview of these pamphlets see Edmund Anthony Spriggs, “The Illnesses and Death of Robert Walpole,” *Medical History* 26 (1982): 421-428.

<sup>6</sup> Roy Porter, “Lay Medical Knowledge in the Eighteenth Century: The Evidence of the *Gentleman’s Magazine*,” *Medical History* 29 (1985): 143. Porter focused on one magazine. I take his approach and expand it to the newspapers, which were published in a more timely fashion than the once-monthly *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. This interest in health and the body was also visible in the changing ideas about exercise and the relation between bodily and mental health and how this was impacted by passion. See Robert Batchelor, “Thinking about the Gym: Greek Ideals, Newtonian Bodies and Exercise in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 2 (2012): 187-197.

<sup>7</sup> Kilburn, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 206.

monarch and royal family than during the reigns of the later Stuarts. Although politicians attempted to create a firm policy of using newspapers to gain support for the king or ministry, reports on his bodily constitution created a more intimate connection between subject and sovereign, even though this was not the monarch's plan, which contributed to demystification.

Early scholarship on the first two Hanoverian monarchs argued that their inaction and inabilities helped individuals like Sir Robert Walpole, Henry Pelham, and Thomas Pelham-Holles, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle quickly become all-powerful prime ministers, through which Parliament completely displaced the power of the crown.<sup>9</sup> Recent works, however, have shown that the situation from 1714 to 1760 was not an era devoid of monarchical power and influence. As E.N. Williams has argued, it was a "slow and irregular process" that established "the cabinet as the central organ of government" and lessened the power of the Crown through the growth of Parliament's influence.<sup>10</sup> Hannah Smith has showed that the court retained a political importance, even after it lost its position as the main cultural hub of England, and the monarch was not consistently viewed as a sacred individual.<sup>11</sup> Even powerful figures like Walpole and the Pelhams, Clarissa Campbell Orr reminds us, were usually courtiers and could not ignore the king's

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Trench, *George II* (London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1973); J.H. Plumb, *The First Four Georges* (London: B.T. Batsford, Ltd., 1956); John Davies, *A King in Toils* (London: L. Drummond, 1938); William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Four Georges: Sketches of Manners, Morals, Court, and Town Life* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1860).

<sup>10</sup> E.N. Williams, *The Eighteenth Century Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 73.

<sup>11</sup> Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).



wishes and hope to retain his support.<sup>12</sup> The extent of the monarch's authority, particularly as it related to foreign affairs, is evident in two of the latest biographies on George II, one by Jeremy Black and the other by Andrew Thompson.<sup>13</sup> Even with the current reassessment of the Hanoverian dynasty, Hannah Smith has recognized that a gap in the literature exists and that more work needs to occur on "the links between the monarchy, the press and the public sphere during this period."<sup>14</sup> This chapter will begin to fill in this void by considering the interconnectedness of the monarchy's embrace of enlightened medicine, the health of the royal family, and how the press manipulated such information.

There were only two brief periods of poor health for George I that were addressed in the newspapers during his reign, even though he suffered minor ailments every now and then. Although the king's health was not usually in a perilous state, the same was not true for George II, or his family, as numerous accounts of their ailments appeared in the public sphere throughout the reign. Even with their relatively clean bills of health, their physical constitutions posed a threat to their political bodies. Excluding James II, who did not spend his final years on the throne, at his death, George I was the oldest English monarch up to that point in history. And his son furthered the record by nine years. In addition to focusing on political crises precipitated by momentary periods of infirmity,

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<sup>12</sup> Clarissa Campbell Orr, "New Perspectives on Hanoverian Britain," *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (2009): 513-529.

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Black, *George II: Puppet of the Politicians?* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007). and Andrew C. Thompson, *George II King and Elector* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Smith, 247 n3.

the reigns of these two kings also provide an opportunity to show the press' portrayal of an aging sovereign.

Newspapers were showing no signs of old age under the first two Hanoverians. Rather, the scope, size, and scale of newspapers and periodicals continued to expand. As Michael Harris has shown, the annual production of newspapers in England expanded from roughly 2.4 million copies in 1713 to 7.3 million copies by 1750.<sup>15</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, daily and evening newspapers joined tri-weekly papers, further expanding coverage of the latest developments in foreign and domestic affairs. Although most newspapers shrank from four to six pages after the 1725 Stamp Act, during the 1730s there was an expansion of cheap weekly newspapers and essay sheets that brought the total number of newspapers to seventeen. This growth continued until 1746 when some newspapers lost their viability after the failed Jacobite rising the previous year, and newspaper totals stabilized at eighteen weekly, tri-weekly, and daily prints combined.<sup>16</sup> Oppositional newspapers included the *Craftsman*, the *London Evening Post*, the *Daily Post*, and the *Universal Spectator*. Jacobite-leaning publications among the oppositional newspapers included *Mist's Weekly Journal*, *Old England* and the *Westminster Journal*. Ministry-supported and supporting papers included the *London Journal*, the *British Journal*, the *Free Briton*, the *Daily Courant*, the *General Evening Post*, and the *Daily Gazetteer*. Joining these newspapers were magazines, including the Tory-leaning *The Gentleman's Magazine* and the Whig-leaning *The London Magazine*, with the former

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<sup>15</sup> Harris, 190. Also see Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 105.

<sup>16</sup> Harris, 31.

enjoying a circulation of approximately 10,000 per issue and the latter averaging around 3,000 per issue.

With the production of so many newspapers and magazines during the reigns of the first two Hanoverians, it is no surprise that the ministers who served under George I and George II, particularly Sir Robert Walpole, kept a close eye on the content of the expanding press. Although there was no official Licensor of the Press anymore, during Walpole's time as Lord Treasurer, there were individuals who reviewed all publications and received payment out of the secret service funds. The Treasury Solicitor came to be a variant of the Licensor of the Press, deciding if material appearing in the public sphere merited prosecution and alerting the Secretaries of State. Laurence Hanson has showed how during the reign of George I, the Treasury Solicitor used "unofficial informers" from within the publishing profession to ferret out libelous works.<sup>17</sup> Similar actions continued under George II with "sporadic" periods of government prosecution of individual printers occurring while Walpole remained influential.<sup>18</sup> After 1742, these prosecutions against the oppositional press diminished considerably.<sup>19</sup>

### **Political Crisis and Spa Water**

When Queen Anne died on August 1, 1714 there was a general uncertainty whether or not "James III" would attempt to claim the English throne, especially since George I did not arrive in Britain until over a month later. In a period when loyalties were conflicted over the succession, even the physical body of the king factored into the

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<sup>17</sup> Laurence Hanson, *Government and the Press 1695-1763* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 39.

<sup>18</sup> Harris, 146.

<sup>19</sup> Black, *The English Press*, 168.

decision making process. César de Saussure, a visitor from the continent, wrote that George I was “...short of stature and very corpulent, though not hindered in his movements by his size; his cheeks are pendent, and his eyes are too big; he looks kind and amiable.”<sup>20</sup> George’s approving modern biographer, Ragnhild Hatton, skeptical of de Saussure’s account, declared that the king “did not impress his new subjects by looks or majestic behaviour.”<sup>21</sup> Even with these indictments of his physical traits and character, and the copious amounts of Jacobite propaganda disseminated throughout England, George I was fortunate that “James III” did not present a more regal and striking appearance. As one anonymous pamphleteer wrote after “James III” landed in Scotland in December 1715:

When we saw the man whom they called our king, we found ourselves not at all animated by his presence; if he was disappointed with us, we were tenfold more so in him. We saw nothing that looked like spirit. He never appeared with cheerfulness or vigour to animate us. Our men began to despise him; some asked if he could speak.<sup>22</sup>

Fortunately enough for the new George I, supporters of the Pretender were not as numerous as originally feared and the Hanoverians remained on the throne.

Although the ’15 was unsuccessful, George I and his ministers missed out on an opportunity to elevate the position of the monarch by systematically using the press to

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<sup>20</sup> César de Saussure, *A Foreign View of England in the Reigns of I. & George II. The Letters of Monsieur César de Saussure to His Family*, trans. Madame Van Muyden (London: John Murray, 1902), 45.

<sup>21</sup> Ragnhild M. Hatton, *George I Elector and King* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 170.

<sup>22</sup> Joyce Marlow, *The Life and Times of George I* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 101. The Pretender might have been underwhelming in part, because he was sick when he met his supporters that winter.

praise his virtues and bind subjects and sovereign closer together.<sup>23</sup> Despite the Secretaries of State continuing to prosecute writers and publishers for libelous, seditious, and treasonable materials, these efforts appear insufficient as Linda Colley's research suggests that it was easier to locate Jacobite-influenced depictions of George I than it was to find works that extolled the virtues of the new monarch.<sup>24</sup> One of the difficulties in helping foster a connection between sovereign and subjects was that unlike Anne, who attempted to be visible and connect with her subjects when she was healthy, the first Hanoverian king was a reserved man who liked his privacy. Hatton states that George I "was available for the necessary ceremonies, but he wanted to read despatches [*sic*] and other documents in peace and therefore usually did not leave his private apartments till nearly noon. He preferred to see his ministers, English and German, at stated and prearranged times except in emergencies."<sup>25</sup> This is not to say that George always kept himself locked away from his subjects. There were occasions when he was more visible, including a trip in June 1715 to Hyde Park, where he reviewed the Horse Guards while being followed by a large number of subjects who kissed his stirrups and shouted their approval of him. Joseph Addison, soon to be a Secretary of State, witnessed the event and desired that George would put himself into similar situations in the future, although this hope went mostly unrealized during the king's reign.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 80-1 and Simon Targett, "Sir Robert Walpole's Newspapers, 1722-42: Propaganda and Politics in the Age of the Walpole Supremacy" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1991), 373-7.

<sup>24</sup> Colley, 206.

<sup>25</sup> Hatton, 133.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Graham, ed., *The Letters of Joseph Addison* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), 336.

One of the few times that George I did make himself accessible in public was during the political crisis in 1717 and 1718 precipitated by the quarrel with his son.<sup>27</sup> It was also a period of time when the king's health was particularly worrisome. In late August 1717, the small circle of courtiers surrounding George I became worried at what appeared to be the development of an anal fistula on top of the hemorrhoids he already experienced.<sup>28</sup> The latter of these ailments had been a long-standing issue which motivated the king to return to Hanover during his reign so that he could take the waters at Pyrmont which he believed to be essential to his health.<sup>29</sup> Understanding the king's desire for privacy in all matters, but especially concerning his health, his German courtiers kept the fistula scare a secret from the English ministers, although word of mouth appears to have spread the news since the Jacobite Duke of Mar wrote to the Duke of Ormonde on September 15, 1717 that, "*Menzies* says in one of his [letters] that *King George* is not in good health and that *the Duke of Shrewsbury* told him lately that he thought *him* agoing."<sup>30</sup> The closest the newspapers came to mentioning the illness was in a report detailing the king's desire to continue dining in public "if in Health."<sup>31</sup> An examination in early September allayed any fear that George I had a fistula, although he

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<sup>27</sup> Briefly, during this two year period of time, the Northern War occurred and a spat existed between George I and the Prince of Wales. As a result of this fight, George I began to dine in public, go to the races at Haymarket, and be visible in public a lot of the time. It was the only time during his reign that he embraced being seen in public and interacting with his subjects directly. For more on this subject see John Beattie, *The English Court in the Reign of George I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 12, 26-28.

<sup>28</sup> Hatton, 205-6. Hatton explains that Louis XIV had undergone surgery for an anal fistula in 1686 and that George I's courtiers were aware of the dangers associated with such a surgery.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>30</sup> H.M.C., *Stuart MSS V*, 44.

<sup>31</sup> *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, August 24, 1717, Issue 37.

was supposed to take a break from hunting and intense activities to allow him a chance to recuperate.<sup>32</sup> George, always a bad patient, did not listen to this last bit of advice and by the middle of September was reported in the newspaper as taking “a Tour round the Country; and at Hounslow his Majesty Dismounted, and shot three Partridges....”<sup>33</sup>

Although the newspapers reported the king’s movements, not one publication discussed the health issue plaguing George I during the fall of 1717. This absence of coverage may have been because the editors never heard about the fistula scare, which seems unlikely although the Hanoverian courtiers were tight-lipped, but more likely reflects the lingering limitations placed on discussing the monarch’s health in public. Although the king’s claim to sacral kingship was diminished and demystification occurred during his reign, there was not a dramatic change in the depth of reportage. During the fall of 1717, the best an interested subject could learn was that the king who loved routine was changing his schedule. For instance, the *Post Boy* noted on August 17 that, “The King hath left off dining in publick at Hampton-Court and at present drinks the Waters of Pyrmont.”<sup>34</sup> The *Weekly Journal* reported that the waters were specifically brought over for the king’s benefit and that because of his water regimen, George I “did not go to the Chapel-Royal” on the previous Sunday.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Hatton, 205-6.

<sup>33</sup> *Original Weekly Journal*, September 7-14, 1717, Issue NA. For other reports of him hunting see: *Evening Post*, September 21-24, 1717, Issue 1270 and *Original Weekly Journal*, September 7-14, 1717, Issue NA.

<sup>34</sup> *Post Boy*, August 15-17, 1717, Issue 4377.

<sup>35</sup> *Weekly Journal or Saturday’s Post*, August 17, 1717, Issue 36.

The king's absence at religious services may have struck some observers as unusual, but German insiders were not surprised that the king's schedule changed suddenly, including John Robethon who had known since early August that "His majesty ... began to drink the waters of Eger and will continue the cure for some time, which will prevent him receiving in the morning and holding Cabinet councils at the usual hour. The Prince of Wales began the same cure yesterday morning."<sup>36</sup> While the newspapers did not elaborate on the constitution of the king, they did report on the indispositions of other leading members of society, including Secretary of State Joseph Addison who was "very Ill ... but thro' the means of some eminent Physicians ... recover'd so well" and Sir William Fazakelry, the Chamberlain of the City of London, who remained "very ill ... of no other distemper that we hear of, than the fatal one called FOURSCORE."<sup>37</sup> These same newspapers, although not directly commenting on the health of the king, included advertisements for Pyrmont water that espoused its curative properties for a variety of ailments. The *Post Man and the Historical Account* listed:

PYRMONT WATERS Fresh and Good, just imported, being of a very strong Chalybeat [*sic*] Nature, but with a Brisk and Spirituous, far exceeding either the Spaw or Liege Waters. They are in flat Bottles, containing almost 3 Pints; to be sold for 18 s. per Dozen or 18 d. per Bottle, by Messieurs Stanton and Smith, at the Pestle and Mortar in Cannonstreet near Gracechurchstreet, London.<sup>38</sup>

Neither the author of the advertisement nor the editor of the newspaper connected this bottled curative with what the king was currently taking, but there were other

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<sup>36</sup> H.M.C., *Polwarth I*, 322.

<sup>37</sup> *Original Weekly Journal*, September 7-14, 1717, Issue NA; *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, September 6, 1717, Issue 39.

<sup>38</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, August 15-17, 1717, Issue 15120.



opportunities during the reign of George I to associate the monarchy with medical remedies.

### **Enlightening the Public about Smallpox Inoculations**

One of the most noticeable intersections of demystification and health which occurred under the Hanoverians was their discontinuation of touching for the King's Evil. This was quite a change from Queen Anne's reign when she touched for the disease as often as she was healthy.<sup>39</sup> The early Hanoverians are often associated with an Enlightenment tradition, in which they embraced science and early modern medicine more so than their predecessors.<sup>40</sup> This is most visible in the decision by George I, his son, and daughter-in-law to inoculate two of the younger princesses with smallpox in April 1722. As Adrian Wilson argues, inoculation was "the Whig and Hanoverian equivalent of the Stuart practice of touching for scrofula.... But whereas the Royal Touch mobilised divine powers, based on heredity right, inoculation deployed natural powers harnessed by man, with the monarch as the benevolent on-looker rather than indispensable participant."<sup>41</sup> The decision to inoculate Princesses Amelia and Caroline was, by far, the highest profile victory for advocates of the process, in particular Mary Lady Wortley Montagu, who had brought the practice back with her from Turkey. Many

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<sup>39</sup> Smith, 95 and Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 210-12.

<sup>40</sup> One example of this association for George II comes from the *London Evening Post*, November 8-11, 1735, Issue 1245: "Yesterday the celebrated Dr. Taylor was presented to the King at St. James's, and had the Honour to kiss his Majesty's Hand in Consideration of his extraordinary Capacity in the Science he professes; and this Day the Prince of Modena with many others of the first Quality did him the Honour to see several of his curious Operations on the Eye, at the Doctor's House in Suffolk-street."

<sup>41</sup> Adrian Wilson, "The Politics of Medical Improvement in Early Hanoverian London," in *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Cunningham and Roger French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 33. Also see Lucy Worsley, *The Courtiers: Splendor and Intrigue in the Georgian Court at Kensington Palace* (New York: Walker & Co., 2010), 230.

of the newspapers tracked the progress of the princesses in the most systematic reportage of royal health since at least 1688.

Beginning on April 17, 1722, the nation eagerly followed along after “the Small Pox was Inoculated upon the two Youngest Princesses” by Mr. Maitland.<sup>42</sup> They were not the only children at the time to undergo the process and the press sketched an image of both the positives and negatives that went along with this enlightened medicine practiced among the upper levels of society. On the same day that the two princesses were inoculated, William Spencer, the youngest son of the Earl of Sunderland, one time Lord Treasurer, underwent the same process.<sup>43</sup> Similar to the reports about the princesses a few days after their exposure, the accounts of William’s inoculation were positive, noting that he was “in a fair Way of doing well.”<sup>44</sup> As the *London Journal* reported that inoculating for smallpox was beginning “to be greatly approved of,” Lady Wortley Montagu expressed a similar sentiment in a letter to Lady Mar. She wrote, “I suppose the same faithfull Historians [newspapers?] give you regular Accounts of the Growth and spreading of the Innoculation of the small pox, which is become almost a General practise, attended with great success.”<sup>45</sup> This type of medical conversation in the press continued to develop through the reign of George I and expanded even more under George II. But with the positive news of medical developments also came the inevitable

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<sup>42</sup> *Evening Post*, April 17-19, 1722, Issue 1985 and *Daily Journal*, April 17, 1722, Issue CCCLXXXV.

<sup>43</sup> *Daily Journal*, April 21, 1722, Issue CCCLXXXIX.

<sup>44</sup> *London Journal*, April 21, 1722, Issue CXLIII.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Halsband, ed., *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 2:15.

setbacks; such was the case with Sunderland's son. Less than four days after his exposure, "William Spencer, only Son of the Countess Dowager of Sunderland, lately inoculated for the Small-Pox, dy'd on Saturday last in the Afternoon."<sup>46</sup>

Even after the sad news of William's death, other members of the nobility followed the inoculation trend and exposed their children to the disease, including Lord Batersea and Lord Townshend, with the bravest soul being Lord Bathurst, who had six of his children inoculated.<sup>47</sup> However, not everyone was still optimistic about the positives of the royal-supported medical advancement. As the *Daily Post* reported, "The eldest Son of the Duke of Dorset, of about 8 or 9 Years old, underwent the usual Preparations for Inoculating the Small-Pox; but the design'd Operation is hitherto suspended upon the Death of the late Earl of Sunderland's Son."<sup>48</sup> In light of William's death and the skepticism toward inoculation it helped create, even more eyes turned to the health of the princesses. Fully embracing their position as medical advocates before an interested public, the royal family made no efforts to conceal reports concerning the health of Amelia and Caroline. A week after receiving the inoculation, the *Daily Journal* of April 23 informed the public that the princesses had "complain'd of Pains in their Heads, Limbs, &c."<sup>49</sup> By April 26, 1722, the *Daily Journal* reported that all signs indicated that the girls would "have them [smallpox] very favourably."<sup>50</sup> This news was of welcome

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<sup>46</sup> *Evening Post*, April 21-24, 1722, Issue 1987 and *Post Boy*, April 21-24, 1722, Issue 5110.

<sup>47</sup> *London Journal*, April 21, 1722, Issue CXLIII; *Daily Journal*, April 24, 1722, Issue CCCXCI; *Daily Journal*, April 25, 1722, Issue CCCXCII.

<sup>48</sup> *Daily Post*, April 30, 1722, Issue 806.

<sup>49</sup> *Daily Journal*, April 24, 1722, Issue CCCXCI.

<sup>50</sup> *Daily Journal*, April 26, 1722, Issue CCCXCIII.

relief to the whole royal family who were “under great Anxiety for their Welfare,” but especially Caroline, their mother, who checked on them frequently.<sup>51</sup> Her attendance on her children was also the subject of coverage in the press.<sup>52</sup> Despite one bad night for Amelia, by the start of May the newspapers reported that “the two young Princesses are in a fair Way of doing well.”<sup>53</sup> The public was happy with the reporting taking place, as seen in the diary of the loyalist Gertrude Savile. Of the inoculation process she noted:

It was so well aprov'd that it was ventured upon the 2 youngest Princesses Emellia and Carrolina [*sic*], (Princes Ann had them naturally [*sic*] before). Both did very well with it. One bennefit in that way was that it never spoyl'd the Face; besides that the Body was well prepair'd for it and that it was in the power to have the best sort by takeing it from such.<sup>54</sup>

Although there was no indication that the princesses might die as a result of their inoculations, this event, with its convergence of royalty, medicine, and increased coverage in the newspaper was indicative of what would develop more significantly after the reign of George I.

### A Stroke of Poor Health

While the nation's focus was on the convalescence of his granddaughters in 1722, George I remained the picture of health. Aside from occasional problems with hemorrhoids, George I was remarkably healthy for a man in his sixties. He tested his aging body during the frequent trips he took between England and his Hanoverian domains on the continent. In October 1723, during a visit to the town of Charlottenburg

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<sup>51</sup> *Daily Journal*, April 24, 1722, Issue CCCXCI.

<sup>52</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account*, April 24-26, 1722, Issue 5473.

<sup>53</sup> *Daily Journal*, April 28, 1722, Issue CCCXCV and *Daily Post*, April 30, 1722, Issue 806.

<sup>54</sup> Alan Saville, ed., *Secret Comment: The Diaries of Gertrude Savile 1721-1757* (Devon: The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire, 1997), 29.

in Prussia, the English king met with the King and Queen of Prussia. As Hatton explains it, on the first day of his stay, George “suffered a fainting-fit at the festive feast of welcome. This has been regarded as a slightly stroke, though probably because the king died of a stroke in 1727. In any case, George’s indisposition was brief.”<sup>55</sup> Of the admittedly incomplete run of English newspapers in the Burney Collection, not even all those that survive reported on the incident in Prussia. Interestingly though, one of the few that did was the official *London Gazette*. It stated:

The Diversions of the Evening were a little interrupted, by His Britannick Majesty’s being taken with a sudden Indisposition towards the End of Supper, which was imputed to the Heat of the Room occasioned by so much Company, and to His Majesty’s having travelled that Day 18 German Miles, which is reckoned about 100 English, without taking any Refreshment. But this Indisposition went off so soon, that it did not hinder His Majesty from going with the Company to the Drawing-Room, leading the Queen of Prussia. His Majesty having had a very good Night’s Rest, and finding himself perfectly recovered, walked in the Gardens a long time this Morning with the King of Prussia, and afterwards dined in Publick.<sup>56</sup>

This report stands out as unique because it is the only time the newspaper published by authority mentioned an indisposition of George I during the entire reign. The likelihood of the report’s appearance was to stop any rumors from spreading and assure loyal and Jacobite subjects alike that although the king was not in England, and regardless of what rumors they might hear, the sovereign was healthy.

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<sup>55</sup> Hatton, 162.

<sup>56</sup> *London Gazette*, October 5-8, 1723, Issue 6205. The other account appeared in *Evening Post*, October 5-8, 1723, Issue 2215. Its report was nearly identical to the one which appeared in the *London Gazette*, which is not surprising, as copying from other newspapers was still a common practice at this point.

Both the *London Gazette* and the *Evening Post*, the only two newspapers that reported the stroke, downplayed the danger posed to George. This type of reporting follows closely with what we saw under the Stuarts – few details and a statement affirming that the monarch had recovered and was able to conduct business. In reality, the situation in 1723, as described by an eyewitness of the event, was considerably more uncertain. According to Wilhelmina, the granddaughter of George I and future Margravine of Bayreuth:

At length we sat down to supper; but the English monarch continued mute. I know not whether he was right, or wrong; but I think he followed the proverb which says ‘it is better to say nothing, than to talk nonsense.’ He felt himself indisposed towards the end of the repast. The Queen wished to persuade him to withdraw: many mutual compliments passed on the occasion; at last the Queen threw her napkin on the table, and arose. The King of England began to totter, my father ran to support him: all rushed about him, but in vain: he fell upon his knees, his wig on one side, and his hat on the other. They gently laid him on the floor, where he remained senseless for a full hour. The care that was taken with him brought him at last gradually to his senses. Meanwhile the King and Queen were in the utmost consternation, and many people thought that this attack was the forerunner of an apoplexy. They earnestly intreated him to withdraw; but he would not, and reconducted the Queen to her apartment. He was very ill all the night; which we only learned by private means. But it did not prevent his re-appearing on the following day. The remainder of his stay was passed in pleasures and festivities.<sup>57</sup>

Although he was out in public again the next day, the king lying senseless on the ground for an hour was hardly the definition of ‘indisposed’ that English readers of the time would have assumed. Clearly the public, reliant on the newspapers for timely accounts of George I’s activities abroad, was not getting the whole story. With the Jacobite threat still a realistic possibility, it is understandable why the newspapers did not give out more

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<sup>57</sup> Norman Rosenthal, ed., *The Misfortunate Margravine: The Early Memoirs of Wilhelmina, Margravine of Bayreuth, Sister of Frederick the Great* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1970), 93.

details, but the incident in Charlottenburg shows that there remained some limitations on the depth of coverage when discussing royal health during the reign of George I. George II's reign saw an expansion of reportage involving royal health that reached levels unprecedented during his father's time on the throne.

### **The Prodigal Son becomes King George II**

After his father's second stroke killed him in June 1727, George II brought a new personality to the monarchy. Less socially awkward and more focused on ceremony, the man could cut an imposing figure. The most glowing account of the new king comes from a letter by Baron Bielfeld, the Secretary of Legation to the King of Prussia. In October 1740, after more than a decade on the throne, George II was describe in this fashion:

George II. king of Great Britain is somthing [*sic*] under the middle stature; but his small figur [*sic*] is very well formd [*sic*].... He stands very upright, but for the most part in an attitude rather too much constraind [*sic*]. His port in general is different from that of a common man. His courtiers call it majestic. There is also something peculiar in his features.... His complexion is rather pale; but on those days that he is quite well, sufficiently fresh....<sup>58</sup>

Baron Bielfeld's letter hints at an underlying illness, something other observers noted when they saw the second Hanoverian. In January 1729, less than two years after his accession, time and stress had already taken their toll on George II. The fiercely loyal Gertrude Savile noted that, although she was greatly satisfied with seeing the king, he appeared "feteagued and tyred ... [and] very much alter'd since he was King.... A Crown is more heavy than bright; I think he seems 10 Years older by the weight of it."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Hooper, 9.

Although infrequently plagued by serious illnesses, when he was indisposed, George II knew the importance of putting on appearances. As one of the best known diarists of his court, John Lord Hervey, observed,

There was a strange affection of an incapacity of being sick that ran through the whole Royal Family, which they carried so far that no one of them was more willing to own any other of the family ill than to acknowledge themselves to be so. I have known the King [to] get out of his bed, choking with a sore throat, and in a high fever, only to dress and have a levee, and in five minutes undress and return to his bed till the same ridiculous farce of health was to be presented the next day at the same hour.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the king's strong aversion to people knowing when he was sick, during his long reign, in large part due to the lessening of the sacred veil of majesty and his advanced age, the subjects of George II came to know considerably more about the health problems of his him, his wife, and his heir than they had known about his father.

### **The Butt of Satire**

Although George I and his son feuded and held different beliefs, there was at least one commonality between the two men: a propensity toward hemorrhoids. George II's backside was a topic of considerable discussion during his reign and the contemporary depictions of it show just how far the demystification of the monarch's body accelerated under the early Hanoverians.<sup>61</sup> The expansion of satirical prints in England, unseen on a

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<sup>59</sup> Saville, 158.

<sup>60</sup> Romney Sedgwick, ed., *Some Material Towards Memoirs of the Reign of King George II by John, Lord Hervey* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1931) 2:372-3. Also see, Plumb, *First Four Georges*, 84.

<sup>61</sup> George II underwent frequent outbursts of anger during which time he had a tendency to turn his back on the nobles and politicians who displeased him. This occurred so often that those who experienced the king's animosity unofficially formed the Beef Rump Club. George did not find this funny, especially as it was well-known that "the Monarch ... is mortal in the part that touched the ground." See



large scale during the Stuarts, brought a new image source for the citizens of the nation to “see” the royal family and politicians of note. Although the prints were not as caustic as the caricatures directed at George III and his son, the one-day George IV, the prints of George II’s reign portrayed the royal body in less than flattering ways, further breaking down the mystical veil.<sup>62</sup> While there were an increasing number of satires aimed at the king beginning in the 1730s, “the maxims that the king can do no wrong and that measures, not men, were being attacked usually restrained the satirists from being overly bold.”<sup>63</sup> If such restraint truly existed, one can only wonder how far some of the artists would have gone otherwise, especially when considering the 1737 print, “The Festival of the Golden Rump.” The drawing shows the king represented as a satyr, who is kicking while experiencing flatulence. At the same time, Queen Caroline prepares to insert an enema of flavored brandy into his anus. Sir Robert Walpole stands by with a magician’s staff overseeing the process, while courtiers lay offerings before the king.<sup>64</sup> The expansion in the size and freedom of the public sphere during the reign of George II is clear when one considers the ballad that mentioned William III’s flatulence during his coronation was deemed seditious, but “The Festival of the Golden Rump” appeared without issue.

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H.M.C., *Egmont Diary II*, 53 and W.S. Lewis, ed., *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 18:71.

<sup>62</sup> Vincent Carretta, *George III and the Satirists from Hogarth to Byron* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), 10.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>64</sup> Black, *George II*, 1. My description of the print draws heavily from the description listed in the British Museum’s Satirical collection catalog. BM Satires 2327. ([http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=3072790&partId=1&searchText=festival+of+the+golden+rump&view=list&page=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3072790&partId=1&searchText=festival+of+the+golden+rump&view=list&page=1)) (accessed October 23 2013).



Figure 4. “The Festival of the Golden Rump.” Anon. Published in *The Craftsman*. March 19, 1737. BM Satires 2327.

The expansion of a visual medium that contributed to demystification occurred at the same time that the production of printed materials also responsible for demystification, declined slightly. Even with this decrease, Lord Hervey still commented frequently on the “lampoons, libels, pamphlets, satires, and ballads [which] were handed about, both publicly and privately, some in print and some in manuscript, abusing and ridiculing the King, the Queen, their Ministers, and all that belonged to them.”<sup>65</sup> One ditty went: “You may strut dapper George, but ‘twill all be in vain;/ We know ‘tis Queen Caroline, not you, that reign-/ You govern no more than Don Philip of Spain./ Then if you would have us fall down and adore you,/ Lock up your fat spouse, as your dad did

<sup>65</sup> Sedgwick, 1:68.

before you.”<sup>66</sup> Although under Sir Robert Walpole there was a developed organization of individuals checking printed material and providing recommendations to the Secretaries of State on which authors to prosecute, David Cressy has found that no one went to the scaffold for treasonous speech during the reigns of the Hanoverians.<sup>67</sup> Although there were no executions, as we will see, newspaper reports that discussed the king’s health, especially when manipulated by the opposition, could still raise the question of prosecution and the very real fury of office holders and supporters of the ministry.

### **Sickly Sovereign vs. Petulant Prince**

One instance when the king’s poor health was exploited for political purposes occurred in the winter of 1736-37. Continuing the Hanoverian tradition of the father and heir disliking each other, by this time Frederick Prince of Wales had become the individual around whom the opposition rallied. When George II left Hanover for England late in December 1736, no one thought anything of the situation. The king suffered “great Fatigue” before he even attempted to cross the North Sea, where the high winds and storms he encountered blew his ship back to Holland.<sup>68</sup> However, news about his ailment and the unfavorable winds was not known right away, as part of the flotilla arrived in England and there were concerns that the king had died at sea.<sup>69</sup> While it was still unclear

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 1:69.

<sup>67</sup> David Cressy, *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious, and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 243.

<sup>68</sup> *London Evening Post*, January 4-6, 1737, Issue 1426; *London Evening Post*, January 11-13, 1737, Issue 1429; *Country Journal or the Craftsman*, January 15, 1737, Issue 645; *Daily Journal*, January 13, 1737, Issue 5894.

<sup>69</sup> *London Evening Post*, December 25-28, 1736, Issue 1422 and *London Gazette*, December 25-28, 1736, Issue 7571.

what had happened to George II's vessel, Hervey reports that among the Prince of Wales and his followers, "there was nothing to be seen but whisperers, messengers running backwards and forwards, and countenances that seemed already to belong to those who had the dominion of this country in their hands...."<sup>70</sup> This was hardly the response of a dutiful son, especially when his mother, Queen Caroline, was beside herself with fear and anxiety for her husband. It is probable that this taste of the power awaiting the Prince of Wales upon his father's eventual death spurred the actions of Frederick and his followers over the coming months.

George II returned safely to England on January 14, 1737 and arrived in the capital the next day, after riding in an open chaise in the middle of winter. Upon his arrival at St. James's, the official *London Gazette* reported that the king "(God be praised) [was] in perfect Health."<sup>71</sup> To all outward appearances the king was healthy. He oversaw a general council on January 19, 1737 and celebrated Frederick's birthday with a ball held at court on January 20.<sup>72</sup> Despite the positive descriptions in the press, Lord Hervey's diary describes a more serious situation behind the scenes at court. By the middle of the month Hervey, noted, "The King, having got a violent cold in his journey and taken no care of it at his first arrival, was extremely out of order, too, at this time, having at once the piles [hemorrhoids], a violent pain in one side of his head, and a little fever. This disorder [was one], for which the King was at last forced to shut himself up

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<sup>70</sup> Sedgwick, 2:635. Also see Thompson, 118-9.

<sup>71</sup> *London Gazette*, January 11-15, 1737, Issue 7576. Parentheses in original source.

<sup>72</sup> *Daily Journal*, January 17, 1737, Issue 5897; *London Gazette*, January 18-22, 1737, Issue 7578; *Daily Gazetteer*, January 19, 1737, Issue 491.

and keep to bed....”<sup>73</sup> Unlike the cold and hemorrhoids the king suffered the previous year, which were not discussed in the press, the situation was considerably different in 1737. Beginning around January 31, 1737, the newspapers seized on the king’s illness and his absence from events. The illness turned into a spin war between the ministry papers, specifically the *Daily Gazetteer*, and the oppositional papers, in particular the *London Evening Post*. For instance, the *Daily Gazetteer* of January 31, 1737 reported, “Yesterday his Majesty was greatly indisposed with a Cold, on which Occasion their Majesties and the rest of the Royal Family heard Divine Service in her Majesty’s Apartments.”<sup>74</sup> Although this ministry-supported newspaper mentioned that George II was “greatly indisposed,” it ended on a positive note which implied there was little to fear from this ailment since “To morrow his Majesty will go, in the usual State, to the House of Peers, and open the Sessions of Parliament....”<sup>75</sup>

In truth, George was too sick to attend the House of Lords to open the sessions and a commission opened Parliament on February 1, 1737. For those at the time suspicious about the commission opening Parliament rather than the king, there was a full-court press by Queen Caroline and the princesses to allay any concerns about the king’s health. Even though they saw his illness was not improving, they spread false reports proclaiming that he was recovering quickly<sup>76</sup> Even with this constant downplaying of the king’s illness, after the commission opened Parliament some of the

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<sup>73</sup> Sedgwick, 3:656.

<sup>74</sup> *Daily Gazetteer*, January 31, 1737, Issue 499.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Sedgwick, 3:656.

newspapers ramped up their language to create uncertainty about the sovereign's constitution. The *London Evening Post*, the leading oppositional evening newspaper at the time, reported "His Majesty continues still very much indisposed; but 'tis hoped his Illness will not be attended with any dangerous Consequence."<sup>77</sup> Outright lying about the king's health might be too transparent, and cause for prosecution, but planting seeds of doubt was an acceptable strategy employed by newspapers that backed Frederick.

The oppositional press was very important during this period of the king's ill health and its reports were different from what had been the case for the oppositional press under the later Stuarts. Rather than making abstract references concerning the sovereign's health, as we saw during Anne's reign, especially in the periodical essays in 1714, reports appeared during the reign of George II which discussed concrete medical issues concerning the royal family without having to deal with the same fear of prosecution. Nevertheless, authors would always include a positive comment which seemingly supported the king's recovery, as seen in the *London Evening Post* report mentioned above or the *Daily Post*'s account of February 3, 1737 which commented: "His Majesty continues still very much indisposed, his Distemper strongly inclining to a Pleurisy; but 'tis hop'd by Bleeding and proper Remedies it will be carry'd off without any Dangerous Consequences."<sup>78</sup> In 1737, a motivating factor in the oppositional press' treatment of the king's health was that the Prince of Wales, who had problems with finances and whose debt had recently reached an alarmingly high level, agreed to put

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<sup>77</sup> *London Evening Post*, February 1-3, 1737, Issue 1438. For more on the oppositional role of the *London Evening Post* see Kilburn, 33.

<sup>78</sup> *Daily Post*, February 3, 1737, Issue 5428.

before Parliament a motion to increase his allowance from the Civil List to £100,000 per annum. Hervey, who despised the Prince of Wales, noted how Frederick, “himself ... as busy as his emissaries, closeted as many members of either House as he could get to come to him, and employed all his servants and friends to speak to every mortal on whom they thought they could possibly prevail, and many even where there was not that possibility.”<sup>79</sup> As he spoke with people, the heir to the throne stressed “how sorry he was to have it so little in his power at present to show his goodwill to his friends, and offering carte blanche for promissory notes of payment when he came to the Crown, with strong insinuations at the same time how near the King’s health seemed to bring that happy day.”<sup>80</sup> On February 5, in the midst of all this discussion, the ministry-supported papers like the *Daily Gazetteer* reported that “his Majesty was so well recovered from his late Indisposition, that he sate up almost all the Day,” while the leading oppositional paper, the *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, countered with a verbatim report of the one in the *Daily Post* two days earlier that “His Majesty continues still very much indisposed, his Distemper strongly inclining to a Pleurisy; but it is hoped by bleeding and proper Remedies it will be carried off without any dangerous Consequences.”<sup>81</sup> Although not overtly menacing, talking about the dangers still faced by the king left the door open for uncertainty regarding the monarch’s long-term prospects. These reports added fuel to the

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<sup>79</sup> Sedgwick, 3:663.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> *Daily Gazetteer*, February 5, 1737, Issue 504; *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, February 5, 1737, Issue 533. Although *The Craftsman* was really an anti-Walpole newspaper, it was clear to everyone that if George II died, Frederick, as the new king, would remove Walpole from his position as Lord Treasurer. For more on the political changes that would have occurred under “King Frederick I” see Aubrey N. Newman, “Leicester House Politics, 1750-1760, From the Papers of John, Second Earl of Egmont,” *Camden Miscellany*, vol. XXIII, 4<sup>th</sup> Series, 7 (1969): 85-228.

belief then circulating that George II suffered from a fatal illness that would soon result in Frederick's ascension.

The sparring between ministry and opposition newspapers left the public unsure what to believe. The *Grub Street Journal*, a newspaper known to fluctuate between both supporting and opposing the ministry depending on the moment, highlighted this confusion. In its February 3 issue, the *Grub Street Journal* quoted all the contradictory reports involving the king's health which had appeared in the leading London newspapers on January 31. On that day, the public learned that, according to the *Daily Post*, "His Majesty, who continues still indispos'd with a cold, was not at chapel, nor any of the royal family." But the *Daily Advertiser* reported "We hear his Majesty is much better of his cold." The *Daily Gazetteer* announced that the king "Was greatly indispos'd of a cold, &c." While the *London Daily Post* noted "His Majesty hath a slight touch of an ague."<sup>82</sup> With the constant flow of contradictory news reports, and the queen and princesses handing out false information, something not seen by members of the royal family under the Stuarts, those who could go to court went in the hopes of deciphering the truth about the king's health and what this meant for the political stability of the nation.

One such individual who went to court for answers was John Perceval, Lord Egmont. On January 30, 1737 he found out that the king was not holding a drawing room nor going to the Chapel Royal. The next day Egmont returned to court and again found the sovereign not meeting with anyone and heard that the king's "piles trouble him much, as likewise the shooting pain in his head, for which he put on leeches."<sup>83</sup> The next few

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<sup>82</sup> *Grub Street Journal*, February 3, 1737, Issue 371.



days produced no definitive reports on George's health, although Egmont guessed correctly, based on the time that the king needed until he would next appear in public, that on top of the piles, he also had a fistula.<sup>84</sup> After days of conflicting reports, Egmont vented his frustration with the situation. On February 6 he attended court and learned the king was better. Egmont penned in his journal: "this has been every day the answer for a week past, and yet they brag that he [George II] is now able to eat a little minced chicken, but Princes are never to be supposed very ill till they die."<sup>85</sup> Egmont's exasperation is understandable and, as we saw in the last chapter when there was tighter regulation of the press, a greater fear of prosecution, and a sacred and mystified monarch on the throne, it was possible to downplay serious illnesses or keep the newspapers silent on them all together. In 1737 the press had more freedom to operate.

While there were no definitive or conclusive public acknowledgements of what plagued George II, especially with the official *London Gazette* making no reference at all to the sovereign, more details emerged than had been the case for earlier periods of illness during George II's reign.<sup>86</sup> The party papers began to report on the advice of the king's physicians and to even detail the medicines and treatments taken by the monarch, such as the *London Evening Post* of February 10-12, 1737 which reported that earlier in the week "...his Majesty began taking the Peruvian Cortex with great Success; but doth

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<sup>83</sup> H.M.C., *Egmont Diary II*, 336.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 339. George II would agree with this statement, since he never wanted people to know that he was ill.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> *London Gazette*, February 1-12, 1737, Issues 7582-7584.

not as yet appear in Publick nor see company.”<sup>87</sup> As to whether or not this medicine was working, the *Daily Gazetteer* noted that “his Majesty was reported by his Physicians to be in a fair Way of Recovery.”<sup>88</sup> On February 9, the doctors’ recommendation, according to the *Daily Gazetteer*, was that George “will speedily remove to Kensington, where he will continue about a Fortnight for the benefit of the Air.”<sup>89</sup> This on the same day that the oppositional *London Evening Post* stressed the slow nature of George’s recovery and that “The Physicians have given their Opinion that it will be advisable for his Majesty to continue at St. James’s there being no Occasion for removing to another Air.”<sup>90</sup> This situation, playing out so differently in the expanded and less-restrictive public sphere than any illness of William III, Anne, or George I shows how the intersection of a demystified monarch, politics, and a public interest in all medical matters resulted in more widely-available personal details about the monarch’s health.

Unfortunately, even with more health information available at this time than in pervious reigns, there was no consensus about the king’s well-being after nearly two weeks of conflicting accounts. During the second week of February 1737, a confluence of health, majesty, money, and politics overshadowed all the news. Everything centered on

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<sup>87</sup> *London Evening Post*, February 10-12, 1737, Issue 1442. Peruvian cortex was “the bark of a middling-sized tree, growing in Peru ... [known for] its efficacy against intermitting fevers.” Source is: William Lewis and John Aikin, *An Experimental History of the Material Medicia, or of the Natural and Artificial Substances Made Use of in Medicine*, 3rd ed. (London: Jo. Johnson, 1784), 485.

<sup>88</sup> *Daily Gazetteer*, February 8, 1737, Issue 506. Reporting on what the physicians actually said was a step in the right direction. As the reign of George II progressed, some physicians were even specified by name when their opinion was reported. These situations were a precursor to the events of George III’s reign during the Regency Crisis when his physicians’ opinions were solicited in the streets, quoted in nearly every newspaper, were publically read at St. James’s on a daily basis, and were even the subject of parliamentary inquiry.

<sup>89</sup> *Daily Gazetteer*, February 9, 1737, Issue 507.

<sup>90</sup> *London Evening Post*, February 8-10, 1737, Issue 1441.

the king's constitution. It was a topic of considerable interest in the capital, in large part because the discussion of Frederick's petition to Parliament was "universally talked of."<sup>91</sup> Hervey explained that Frederick's hope was that news of the pending debate on the petition for an increased Civil List allowance would

set him [George II] a fretting, probably keep him awake, and of course increase his fever, which would answer ... the timing of this measure; which was, knowing the King's warm prompt temper, to put him in such a passion as, in his present weak condition, and which they thought weaker than it was, might go a good way towards killing him.<sup>92</sup>

However, when the queen finally told George II of their son's plans, the king realized that he had to take steps to present a position of strength and vitality.

Despite having surgery for the piles earlier in the month, by the middle of February, George forced himself to begin to "have levees, and see everybody in a [*sic*] morning as usual; and though he looked pale and was much fallen away, he looked much better than those who had not seen him during confinement expected."<sup>93</sup> The newspapers quickly reported on these activities and cultivated the belief that the king's health had not been nearly as bad as speculated. Not only were levees held, but both ministry and oppositional newspapers recognized that George II was well enough to conduct meetings and hold audiences with foreign ambassadors.<sup>94</sup> For the first time in over two weeks, the official *London Gazette* of February 15-17, 1737 mentioned George II and that he held a

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<sup>91</sup> Sedgwick, 3:663.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 662. See also Thompson, 119.

<sup>93</sup> Sedgwick, 3:670.

<sup>94</sup> *Daily Gazetteer*, February 11, 1737, Issue 509 and *London Evening Post*, February 12-15, 1737, Issue 1443.

private audience with “M. Bussy, [who was] sent from the King of France.”<sup>95</sup> Finally, the king appeared in public for the first time on February 17 and “there was a numerous Appearance of the Nobility and Quality at his Levee, to congratulate his Majesty on his happy Recovery.”<sup>96</sup> These same people, undoubtedly, wanted to see for themselves if the king was actually healthy. Beginning February 18, 1737, the newspapers of both political leanings were flooded with reports about the king holding a council at St. James’s, his first appearance at the Chapel Royal in over a month, and his first drawing room. In all cases the reports were that George II was “pretty well recovered” or “perfectly recover’d.”<sup>97</sup> Everything culminated, in a true show of monarchical ceremony, with a healthy George II attending Parliament on February 22. The *London Gazette*, not surprisingly, had as its lead story, “His Majesty came this Day to the House of Peers, and being in His Royal Robes, seated on the Throne with the usual solemnity ... was pleased to give the Royal Assent to” some bills.<sup>98</sup> One observer of this pageantry commented on the staged nature of the journey to Westminster. Lady Irwin wrote to Lord Carlisle that, “The King is gone down to the House, I suppose to show he is not in a dangerous state of health.”<sup>99</sup> With any doubt of the king being indisposed removed from the minds of those voting on the increased allowance, Frederick’s proposal was voted down. The reportage in the newspapers involving George II’s health during February 1737 was the most

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<sup>95</sup> *London Gazette*, February 15-17, 1737, Issue 7586.

<sup>96</sup> *London Evening Post*, February 17-19, 1737, Issue 1445.

<sup>97</sup> *Daily Journal*, February 18, 1737, Issue 5925 and *London Evening Post*, February 19-22, 1737, Issue 1446.

<sup>98</sup> *London Gazette*, February 19-22, 1737, Issue 7587.

<sup>99</sup> H.M.C., *Fifteenth Report*, Appendix VI, 177.

extensive yet seen during the Hanoverian reign but was trumped by the coverage of his wife's fatal illness nine months later.

### **Queen Caroline and the Production of Hanoverian Heirs**

One of the people deeply involved in the actions of 1737 and the chaos between king and prince was Queen Caroline. She had been important to the Hanoverians since their succession in 1714. Because George I did not have a wife, Caroline took over as the hostess for all court functions and helped bond the new dynasty to the English aristocracy.<sup>100</sup> Once her husband became king, people believed George II was “governed by the Queen ... and that she was governed by Sir Robert Walpole.”<sup>101</sup> This politically adept woman was described in 1725 as “...one of the most beautiful princesses in Europe, but [she] has grown too stout. She is witty and well-read, and speaks four or five different languages, and she is gracious and amiable, besides being very charitable and kind....”<sup>102</sup> The stoutness observed two years before she became queen only increased as time went on, to the point that in conversation with Lord Egmont in 1736, Caroline expressed her fear that she might hurt herself turning over in bed because she had grown so large.<sup>103</sup> In addition to problems with her weight, Caroline also had gout in her legs, similar to one of the complaints experienced by the similarly obese Queen Anne.<sup>104</sup> However, unlike

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<sup>100</sup> Smith, 208.

<sup>101</sup> Philip Dormer Stanhope, *Characters by Lord Chesterfield Contrasted with Characters of the Same Great Personages by Other Respectable Writers* (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1778), 4-5.

<sup>102</sup> de Saussure, 46.

<sup>103</sup> H.M.C., *Egmont Diary II*, 319.

<sup>104</sup> Contemporary accounts from Queen Caroline's life draw comparisons between her and Queen Anne and even Queen Elizabeth I. For details of these comparisons, see Kilburn, 77 and 154-5.

Anne, Caroline used a wheelchair when her gout flared up, an event sometimes openly mentioned in the press. For instance, in January 1735, the *Daily Post* noted, “Her Majesty was so much indispos’d with the gout, that she was wheel’d in her chair to and from chapel.”<sup>105</sup> The newspapers’ open recognition of such an infirmity in a member of the royal family was a development of the Hanoverian period. The gout and obesity were cause for concern, since Caroline was important in helping keep control of her husband and his fiery temper.<sup>106</sup> Interest in her health was apparent from the beginning of her time as queen consort. An address by the Court of Aldermen and the Lord Mayor of London in 1727 stated, we “...beg Leave to wish your Majesty Health and Long Life; that you may be a comfort and Delight to His Majesty, and have the Pleasure of being the Author of many blessings to his People.”<sup>107</sup> By 1727, Caroline had already done her duty by bearing numerous children to help ensure the Hanoverian succession.

After the heir-less Stuarts, the fertile Hanoverians attracted more attention in the newspapers. Reflecting the increasingly open nature of the press after the Hanoverian Succession, while successful royal births always received coverage in the press, newspapers contained more detailed descriptions of Caroline’s obstetrical health than

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<sup>105</sup> *Grub Street Journal*, January 30, 1735, Issue 266. Also see Worsley, 237; John Van der Kiste, *King George II and Queen Caroline* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 108; Giles Stephen Holland Fox-Strangways, ed., *Lord Hervey and His Friends 1726-38: Based on Letters from Holland House, Melbury, and Ickworth* (London: John Murray, 1950), 182.

<sup>106</sup> During one of Caroline’s illnesses in November 1734 Sir Robert Walpole informed her: “Madam, your life is of such consequence to your husband, to your children, to this country, and indeed to many other countries, that any neglect of your health is really the greatest immorality you can be guilty of.... Your Majesty knows that this country is entirely in your hands, that the fondness the King has for you, the opinion he has of your affection, and the regard he has for your judgment, are the only reins by which it is possible to restrain the natural violences [*sic*] of his temper, or to guide him through any part where he is wanted to go.” Source is Sedgwick, 2:373-4.

<sup>107</sup> *London Gazette*, June 13-17, 1727, Issue 6590.

when Anne was pregnant. Such was the case during the summer and fall of 1717. Rather than just reporting after a successful birth occurred, as they did under the Stuarts, the newspapers detailed the health scares associated with pregnancy and provided details of the preparations for the birth of a new Hanoverian as they were ongoing. On August 17, 1717 the *Weekly Journal* reported “Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, is very big with child, and is in good health; and expected at St. James’s Palace 2 weeks hence.”<sup>108</sup> A week later, the *Weekly Packet* mentioned Caroline was planning to have her lying in at St. James’s in three weeks.<sup>109</sup> On August 31, 1717, another paper reported that, “The Midwife of her Royal Highness, the Princess of Wales, who has constantly assisted her, at her lying in, arrived here some Days ago, from Anspach in Germany, and is since gone to Hampton Court.”<sup>110</sup> Even with her trusty midwife in place, Caroline became very ill on October 1, 1717. Believing this was the start of her labor, Sir David Hamilton was summoned quickly, but it was a false alarm. Caroline “found herself so well again, that on Thursday in the Evening she return’d to St. James’s....”<sup>111</sup> Finally, on November 2, Caroline gave birth to an (apparently) healthy son, Prince George William.<sup>112</sup>

The newspapers marked this auspicious occasion similarly to how they described Anne’s successful delivery of the Duke of Gloucester in 1689. There were reports of bells, bonfires, and canon blasts. The *Evening Post* commented on the “great Appearance

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<sup>108</sup> *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*, August 17, 1717, Issue NA.

<sup>109</sup> *Weekly Packet*, August 24-31, 1717, Issue 269.

<sup>110</sup> *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*, August 31, 1717, Issue NA.

<sup>111</sup> *Weekly Packet*, September 28-October 5, 1717, Issue 274.

<sup>112</sup> Prince George William died in February 1718. It was his christening that led to the fallout between the Prince of Wales and George I.

of the Nobility and Foreign Ministers on Sunday at St. James's to Compliment his royal Highness, who were admitted to see the young Prince.”<sup>113</sup> The *Flying Post* also mentioned the many viewers of the new prince but went on to report that George William had “all the Symptoms of good Health; and Her ROYAL HIGHNESS, blessed be God, is in as fair a way of Recovery as can be expected.”<sup>114</sup> The *London Gazette*, which had many good reasons to report on the events, similarly focused on the health of mother and child noting, “Her Royal Highness's safe Delivery being soon made publick by the firing of the Cannon in St. James's Park, and at the Tower, an universal Joy was seen that Evening among all Sorts of People....”<sup>115</sup> The production of an heir by Anne would have been more important than any birth Caroline might have had after the Hanoverian Succession because she already had borne Frederick, the heir, in 1707. Yet the difference in how her other pregnancies were reported reflects the increasing freedom of the newspapers to comment on matters of health after 1714, when the demystified Hanoverians took over. The interest in Caroline's health in 1717 was still apparent twenty years later, when she suffered a fatal illness.

### **Caroline's Death**

As we have already seen, the early part of 1737 was difficult for the royal family. George II was feared lost at sea and had been very sick when he did return to England. Frederick had taken a private concern about his portion of the Civil List and turned it into a matter of public discussion which ultimately resulted in a parliamentary vote. All of

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<sup>113</sup> *Evening Post*, November 2-5, 1717, Issue 1288.

<sup>114</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, November 2-5, 1717, Issue 4031.

<sup>115</sup> *London Gazette*, November 2-5, 1717, Issue 5587.



these events took their toll on the queen, which resulted in her being sick on and off for most of the year.<sup>116</sup> Her final illness, not initially believed to be an automatic death sentence, received more in-depth health reporting by the newspapers and magazines than all the illnesses experienced by her father-in-law, husband, or son. Not only was there depth to the reports, but they were also quite accurate compared to the accounts provided by eyewitnesses.

On November 9, 1737 Caroline complained of stomach pains while working on her library in St. James's Park. Although she initially took some medicine prescribed to her by the physicians, her complaint did not lessen. On the same day, there was a drawing room which George wanted to cancel because of his wife's indisposition. But Caroline, knowing how much the king hated whenever anyone was sick, claimed she was fine and endured the drawing room, even though Hervey noted that she "looked extremely ill, and complained much more than was her custom to do when she suffered most."<sup>117</sup> After surviving the drawing room and retiring to bed, Caroline continued to grow worse. She ended up taking a number of remedies and was bled twelve ounces but remained ill. Caroline's fever increased, her pain returned, and she could not keep down food or drink.<sup>118</sup> The queen passed a difficult and restless night before being blooded again on November 10. Even with Caroline too ill to attend, the king was convinced to hold a levee that day, for the sake of public appearances, where he met with a number of foreign

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<sup>116</sup> Sedgwick, 3:670-1.

<sup>117</sup> Sedgwick, 3:877-8. I cite Hervey a lot because his is the most complete account we have of the final days of Caroline's life.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:880.

ministers.<sup>119</sup> The next day, Friday November 11, the queen required more bleeding, which almost completely removed her fever, but she remained unable to pass anything through her gastrointestinal tract and began again to vomit. Egmont reported that it was the new consensus that the queen suffered from “gout in the stomach and bowels.”<sup>120</sup> The events of the weekend provided tiny glimmers of hope that ultimately led to disappointment and sadness.

Even before the weekend, however, Caroline’s illness had developed into something concerning to the public, to judge from its extensive coverage in the press. This event is a prime example of the public’s growing interest in health and medicine, the demystification of monarchy, and the press’ recognition that royal reportage was in high demand. Although the estranged Prince of Wales waited outside the palace gates trying to get information, the queen’s comment that he wished to have “the pleasure of seeing my last breath go out of my body, by which means he would have the joy of knowing I was dead five minutes sooner than he could know it in Pall Mall,” was rather fitting.<sup>121</sup> Relatively accurate information was leaking from the palace and making its way into the newspapers of both political leanings. For the days leading up to November 12, the *London Evening Post* reported that the physicians and the king sat up with the queen all night, that she was blooded on multiple occasions, and that “This Day at Noon her Majesty lay at the Point of Death.”<sup>122</sup> *Read’s Weekly Journal* reported that the initial

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 3:881.

<sup>120</sup> H.M.C., *Egmont Diary II*, 443.

<sup>121</sup> Sedgwick, 3:887.

<sup>122</sup> *London Evening Post*, November 10-13, 1737, Issue 1559. *Daily Gazetteer*, November 14, 1737, Issue 745.

cause of concern was “gout in her stomach” and that “she was let Blood about Two Thursday morning, and again about Eight, which praised be God, had so good an Effect, that at Night she was very well recover’d.”<sup>123</sup> Some newspaper issues did not even cover the early days of Caroline’s illness, instead focusing on other influential members of society, such as Sir Robert Walpole’s “being ill of the gout” or “The celebrated [actress?] Miss Skerret [who] lies so dangerously ill at her House in Dover-street, that she is attended by three Physicians.”<sup>124</sup> Although the accounts which appeared during the first few days of the queen’s illness were not graphically detailed, the prominent location of them as the lead story in the London section of the newspapers, coupled with the depth of the reporting, reflected the freedom granted to publishers to discuss a once illicit topic, which ultimately helped pull back the sacred veil of monarchy.<sup>125</sup>

For those courtiers and politicians gathered at St. James’s, they were about to learn something about the body of the queen that had been hidden and did not appear in the newspapers until after the queen’s death. On Saturday November 12, with increased pain in her stomach, a doctor arrived and learned from the king that Caroline had been keeping secret a rupture by her naval. The surgeon, Dr. Ranby, felt her stomach for the first time, since it was still considered indelicate to physically examine the royal body,

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<sup>123</sup> *Read’s Weekly Journal*, November 12, 1737, Issue 688.

<sup>124</sup> *London Evening Post*, November 8-10, 1737, Issue 1558 and *Daily Gazetteer*, November 10, 1737, Issue 742. The first few issues of the *London Gazette* published after Caroline’s illness also failed to reference the queen’s health. *London Gazette*, November 8-12, 1737, Issue 7648 and *London Gazette*, November 12-15, 1737, Issue 7649.

<sup>125</sup> Although it was becoming more common under the Hanoverians for royal reportage to be the lead story, this was not the case in earlier reigns when health reports were tucked in the middle of paragraphs, if they appeared at all. Not even all the illnesses which occurred under the Hanoverians received this same placement. All of this shows that there was not yet an established pattern of placement but domestic news was usually placed second. For more on the subject of placement of reports and the format of newspapers, see Hanson, Appendix VI, 146.

and instantly cried out that she had a rupture and needed surgery, declaring “there is no more time to be lost; Your Majesty has concealed it too long already.”<sup>126</sup> As Egmont recounted the event in his diary, he chided the queen for keeping the secret: “Thus her too great modesty was near costing her her life. She had kept this so great a secret that neither her children nor any of her servants who dress and put on her shirt even knew it.”<sup>127</sup> The subject of her health and its private nature is apparent in the efforts taken by Caroline to hide this knowledge for over a decade. This was not a belief shared by many of her subjects.

Another surgeon was brought in and the proposed idea of making an incision to push the rupture into the body was rejected. A few hours later a lancing of the hernia occurred, which brought forth a little matter, but not enough to “abate the swelling in any material degree or give them any great hope of her recovery.”<sup>128</sup> On Sunday morning, November 13, the physicians examined the lanced area and discovered it was mortifying. The surgeons expressed their belief that the queen would not survive more than a couple of hours. Then a little while later, upon opening the wound and cutting off part of the ruptured intestine, they found that their earlier declaration of the area being mortified was incorrect.<sup>129</sup> On November 13 and 14, according to Hervey,

the Queen was what the doctors, surgeons, and courtiers called better, there being no threatening symptoms in her wound, and her vomitings being much slackened; but nothing passing through her, those who judged by essential circumstances and not on the hourly variation of trifles,

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<sup>126</sup> Sedgwick, 3:890.

<sup>127</sup> H.M.C., *Egmont Diary II*, 443.

<sup>128</sup> Sedgwick, 3:893.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:894-7.

whatever they might say from fashion or to please, could not in reality believe the Queen's condition more hopeful, or less dangerous, whilst that main point of the internal stoppage continued in the same situation.<sup>130</sup>

During the uncertain hours after the surgery on November 13, there were so many people gathered in the queen's rooms, that the princesses cleared them out and the king declared an information blackout, with the Lady of the Bedchamber instructed to give out "no-intelligence of the doctors' verdict on Her Majesty's situation."<sup>131</sup> Little happened until Thursday November 17, when Caroline began vomiting again and one of her guts burst open and matter came spilling out of the rupture. "The running at the wound was in such immense quantities that it went all through the quilts of the bed and flowed all over the floor."<sup>132</sup> Even with the onlookers kicked out of the palace and a news blackout ordered by the king, word of this rupture made its way into the streets. In response, Alexander Pope penned the epigram: "Here lies wrapt up in forty thousand towels/ The only proof that Caroline had bowels."<sup>133</sup> The next few days provided no cause for hope and the queen finally died on November 20, 1737.

For those reading the newspapers during the last week of Caroline's life, they were able to grasp the constantly changing nature of her illness. The *London Evening Post* of November 10-12 informed its readers that "her Most Sacred Majesty lay so dangerously ill that her Life was despair'd of ... [that] Expresses were dispatch'd to

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 3:900.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 3:900.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 3:905-6.

<sup>133</sup> Worsley, 247. Also see John Butt, ed., *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A Reduced Version of the Twickenham Text* (Chelsea: Sheridan Books, Inc., 1963), 832.

several Parts of the Kingdom, and beyond Sea.”<sup>134</sup> The *Daily Gazetteer*’s report on November 14 showed just how fluid the situation was: “A Party of his Majesty’s Guards attended all Night ... in order to escort his Majesty to Kensington: his Majesty intending immediately to retire thither upon the Death of the Queen, which was expected every Moment.” The article concluded by noting that the queen had rallied and “Her Majesty’s Physicians are of Opinion, that her Majesty is in a fair Way of Recovery.”<sup>135</sup> The queen’s inability to get any real sleep was a constant reference in Hervey’s account, but the press’ reports were divided on the subject. Sometimes, apparently, Caroline slept well, while other reports in the public sphere said that she “rested but indifferently.”<sup>136</sup> Additionally, whenever she tried to eat something, she was repulsed at the taste and since her bowels were not working, food did not help her situation. Yet, the newspapers mentioned Caroline eating Ponada and jelly.<sup>137</sup>

The oppositional newspapers in particular had numerous details not appearing in ministry-supported prints, particularly medical information. Both the *London Evening Post* and *The Craftsman* mentioned that the queen had undergone a successful surgery, and there were references to the surgeons “Mr. Dickens, Mr. Amyand, Mr. Buiffiere, Mr. Shipton, and Mr. Ranby, [through whom] the Queen found great Relief....”<sup>138</sup> Then there

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<sup>134</sup> *London Evening Post*, November 10-12, 1737, Issue 1559.

<sup>135</sup> *Daily Gazetteer*, November 14, 1737, Issue 745.

<sup>136</sup> *London Evening Post*, November 12-15, 1737, Issue 1560 and *London Evening Post*, November 15-17, 1737, Issue 1561.

<sup>137</sup> *London Evening Post*, November 15-17, 1737, Issue 1561 and *London Evening Post*, November 17-19, 1737, Issue 1562.

<sup>138</sup> *London Evening Post*, November 12-15, 1737, Issue 1560 and *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, November 19, 1737, Issue 593.

were references indicating the medicines Caroline took including that “the Physicians prescrib’d *Sena* for the Queen....”<sup>139</sup> In the midst of all the confused and contradictory accounts, the *London Gazette* finally mentioned Caroline’s illness on November 19 with the report that, “Her Majesty has for several Days past been extremely indisposed, but Thanks be to God is now judged to be on the mending Hand. The King has thought fit to order, that Publick Prayers be put up in all the Churches ... for the Recovery of her Majesty’s Health.”<sup>140</sup> By November 19 it was clear to everyone around Caroline that she was going to die, yet the newspaper published by authority did not reflect that reality.

It is possible that the official newspaper finally chimed in because on November 17, Egmont noted “it was even reported about town that she [Caroline] was dead.”<sup>141</sup> With the *London Gazette* saying the queen was improving, other newspapers, including the *Daily Gazetteer*, reflected a similar sentiment, even though the physicians and surgeons had already given up hope of her recovery.<sup>142</sup> Only once Caroline died did the newspapers finally report the true underlying cause of what ailed her. The *London Evening Post* stated the queen died “of a Rupture and Mortification of the Bowels.”<sup>143</sup> The account in the *London Evening Post* was more informative than the description in the *London Gazette*, which merely stated that the “Queen departed this Life, after an Illness

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<sup>139</sup> *London Evening Post*, November 15-17, 1737, Issue 1561.

<sup>140</sup> *London Gazette*, November 15-19, 1737, Issue 7650.

<sup>141</sup> H.M.C., *Egmont Diary II*, 444. Peter Wentworth, also mentioned these rumors in a letter to his brother which read “The Queen being so often reported dead when she was alive made me desire you would not believe her dead till you heard it from me....” Source: James J. Cartwright, ed., *The Wentworth Papers 1705-1739. Selected from the Private and Family Correspondence of Thomas Wentworth, Lord Raby, Created in 1711 Earl of Strafford, of Stainborough, Co. York* (London: Wyman & Sons, 1883), 532.

<sup>142</sup> *Daily Gazetteer*, November 18, 1737, Issue 749.

<sup>143</sup> *London Evening Post*, November 19-22, 1737, Issue 1563.

of twelve Days....”<sup>144</sup> Even with the *London Gazette* making little contribution to the reportage of Caroline’s final illness, by 1737 the press had expanded to such a scale that accurate and timely information was available in the daily newspapers, likely supplied by servants at St. James’s. Although some periodicals shied away from providing all the details the public craved due to “...the Sacredness of the Characters that are concerned...,” it was clear that topics considered seditious or treasonable under the Stuarts were at least begrudgingly tolerated under the Hanoverians.<sup>145</sup> The progress of demystifying the monarchy was evident in the writings of Lady Catherine Jones who, at Caroline’s death, observed that “even the ‘glaring mask of Royalty’ hid only ‘flesh, however dignified or distinguished.’”<sup>146</sup> If nothing else, the coverage of a consort’s health increased substantially since George, Prince of Denmark had his final illness only briefly mentioned in the newspapers during Anne’s reign. The irregular progress of demystification continued in the later years of George II’s reign, as the realities of old age were exploited by members of the opposition in the public sphere. However, such reports were only possible once the threat of Jacobite invasion was no longer a serious concern.

### **Jacobites and Restrained Publications**

Throughout the reigns of the first two Hanoverians, there remained the cloud of Jacobite invasion or uprising. The threat was more real to the foreign Georges than it had been for the English-born daughters of James II. While George I dealt with an uprising in 1715, less than a year after his succession, it was nearly three decades later before George

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<sup>144</sup> *London Gazette*, November 19-22, 1737, Issue 7651.

<sup>145</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, VII (1737): 700.

<sup>146</sup> As quoted in Worsley, 249.



II dealt with a similar challenge to his crown. The trouble that arose in 1745 required a serious response from the aging George II, who did not flee while an army was raised. The Jacobite Rising of 1745 showed signs of success and spread into northern England after capturing a number of towns in Scotland. Skirmishes and battles continued into 1746, culminating with the victory of the Duke of Cumberland over the forces of Charles Edward Stuart at the Battle of Culloden in April. Although a decisive victory occurred for the Hanoverians at Culloden, any discussion of a change in the reigning monarch always led to speculation on efforts by the Stuarts to reclaim the throne, even if few believed that Bonnie Prince Charlie could muster another army so quickly. Such an opportunity appeared to be developing in the fall of 1746 when the king's poor health created rumors that a new monarch would soon be a reality.

As George II's birthday approached, a celebration was planned for October 30, 1746, but a few days in advance, the press began to report that he would not be able to leave "from Kensington Palace to St. James's, to keep his Birth-Day on Thursday next, on Account of his Indisposition, the same being deferr'd for a few Days."<sup>147</sup> The *London Gazette* also stated that the birthday celebrations would not be held as planned but explained this as "His Majesty's Pleasure."<sup>148</sup> Not surprisingly, the government mouthpiece did not refer to any indisposition of the monarch. On October 30 the situation appeared to be improving as the *London Evening Post* reported the king, "who has been greatly indispos'd, is much better."<sup>149</sup> Savile, as devoted to the king now as she was when

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<sup>147</sup> *London Evening Post*, October 25-28, 1746, Issue 2961.

<sup>148</sup> *London Gazette*, October 25-8, 1746, Issue 8583.

he first ascended the throne, recorded in her diary that “the King was so ill of the Piles that his Birth Day could not be kept in London, nor Himself remove from Kinsington.”<sup>150</sup> Interestingly enough, despite George II twice before having serious cases of piles that were never specifically mentioned in the press, he received a birthday present in 1746 when the *General London Evening Mercury* announced that the king was indisposed and “...is with the Piles.”<sup>151</sup> This was the first time the king’s well-known ailment appeared in the newspapers, although it was not at this time a life-threatening concern.

Although the newspapers spread news about the king’s indisposition and tried to make clear that there would be a delay to the birthday celebration, this did not stop many people and places from having the usual festivities on October 30. The most embarrassing development was the need to quickly contact the soldiers at St. James’s Park to have them put away the canons they were preparing to fire in celebration of the birthday.<sup>152</sup> But, in the midst of all the celebrations, there was an unusual level of silence concerning the king’s health. In all likelihood, the limitation of reports was related to the recent Jacobite threat. The vast majority of printers, even those who published the oppositional papers and might have wished for Frederick to be king, did not want to see the Anglican George II replaced by a Catholic Stuart. After the recent invasion into England by Jacobite forces, detailed accounts of an ailing king might have rekindled the

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<sup>149</sup> *London Evening Post*, October 28-30, 1746, Issue 2962 and *General Advertiser*, October 29, 1746, Issue 3748.

<sup>150</sup> Saville, 277.

<sup>151</sup> *General London Evening Mercury*, October 30, 1746, Issue 548.

<sup>152</sup> *London Evening Post*, October 30-November 1, 1746, Issue 2963. *General London Evening Mercury*, November 1, 1746, Issue 549. *General Advertiser*, October 31, 1746, Issue 3749.

hopes of disaffected citizens. On the other hand, silence could also be problematic for helping the king's supporters rally to his side. Such was the case for Alexander Hume Campbell who was in London during this time and wrote to his brother, Hugh, Earl of Marchmont, both of whom sought to join the ministry. In one letter, dated October 28, 1746, Campbell wrote:

(The King has been very ill and is not yet well. The birthday is put off and I fear he is worse than they will tell. People suspect bad and avow their apprehension from his successor's character.) If anything happens I shall let you know it as soon as I do myself and the particulars which I know not well. (For those who know will not tell but by pretending he is perfectly well, which is not truth, make people believe him very bad.)<sup>153</sup>

Two days later, on the king's actual birthday, the situation remained just as unclear. This time Campbell observed, "Some say, and I hope it is true, (the King is better. Others believe him so bad that they have bought mourning, and the people in the streets say publickly that he is dead. But I believe he is better.)"<sup>154</sup> November 1 brought some comfort as the younger brother reported to Marchmont that "to the great joy of the people the King is recover'd and very well."<sup>155</sup> The lack of antipathy toward George II in the newspapers during this time is not surprising as there were almost no Jacobite newspapers left and the oppositional papers were regrouping and redirecting their focus after Walpole's loss of power in 1742.<sup>156</sup>

Alexander Campbell Hume's positive letter of November 1, 1746 to his brother reflected the latest news in the press. Although the newspapers and magazines did not

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<sup>153</sup> H.M.C., *Polwarth V*, 183. Parentheses appear in the original source.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 183-4.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>156</sup> Harris, 130-2.

refer to the rumors circulating that the king had died or that people had begun to buy mourning materials, the leading oppositional evening newspaper reported that he was “perfectly recover’d.”<sup>157</sup> Other papers acknowledged that George II was recovering but was not yet able to see any company.<sup>158</sup> It seems that the *London Evening Post* and Campbell were both premature in their proclamation of the sovereign having completely regained his health. Reports appeared that the king’s surgeon, Dr. Chisleden, continued to attend the monarch on November 5, which seems unnecessary if his ailments were gone.<sup>159</sup> At last, on November 7, a report appeared that the king was “so well recover’d of his late Indisposition, that he dress’d on Thursday, and received Company publicly, for the first Time.”<sup>160</sup> Soon enough the king attended the House of Lords, even though it was still reported in the public sphere that his physicians recommended George visit Bath in order to recover his health more fully.<sup>161</sup> Finally, the *London Gazette* chimed in on November 11 with a report that since the king had moved to St. James’s, “the birth-Day will be kept on Thursday next the 13th Instant.”<sup>162</sup> The situation passed without incident, but it is a useful moment to see how, in certain circumstances, the press could limit its

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<sup>157</sup> *London Evening Post*, November 1-4, 1746, Issue 2964.

<sup>158</sup> *General London Evening Mercury*, November 1, 1746, Issue 549 and *Old England or The BroadBottom Journal*, November 1, 1746, Issue 183.

<sup>159</sup> *General Advertiser*, November 5, 1746, Issue 3753.

<sup>160</sup> *Old England or The Broadbottom Journal*, November 8, 1746, Issue 184. *London Evening Post*, November 6-8, 1746, Issue 2966.

<sup>161</sup> *London Evening Post*, November 13-15, 1746, Issue 2969 and *London Evening Post*, November 15-18, 1746, Issue 2970.

<sup>162</sup> *London Gazette*, November 8-11, 1746, Issue 8587.

coverage of the royal family, to avoid creating political unrest during periods of foreign threats. The same was not always true when the threat involved internal political disputes.

### **Ailing Father, Dead Son**

By February 1751, at age 67, George II was adding to his record of being the oldest English monarch in history, although for how much longer was always the question. On February 17, he had to cancel a drawing room because he “has been for these three or four Days past indisposed with a Cold, but was on Sunday much better; tho’ not well enough to go to the Chapel Royal.”<sup>163</sup> The next day he “was so well recover’d, that he gave orders for several Persons of distinction to be admitted into his private Apartments.”<sup>164</sup> Reports on his health began to appear as the lead story in the London section of the newspapers, which had not been the case very often in earlier periods of illness. One constant, however, was maintained: the official *London Gazette* did not report on this illness either. By February 22 the king “reciv’d the Compliments of the Nobility and Gentry” while celebrating the birthday of the Princess of Hesse.<sup>165</sup> Even with positive accounts in the newspapers noting George II’s ability to meet and greet elites, skepticism and rumors still spread throughout the town. On March 1, in a ciphered letter from Mr. Wall, the Spanish minister, to Don Joseph de Carvajal, the Spanish king’s Minister of State, Wall commented, “The King’s health here is a mystery, for not having appeared in public since he fell ill, and getting up each day for only two or three hours, there are some disaffected persons who say he cannot recover, and that he has three or

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<sup>163</sup> *General Evening Post*, February 16-19, 1751, Issue 2685.

<sup>164</sup> *London Evening Post*, February 16-19, 1751, Issue 3640.

<sup>165</sup> *London Evening Post*, February 21-23, 1751, Issue 3642.

four mortal disorders; however, people belonging to the court assure that he is better....”<sup>166</sup> On March 4, the king finally appeared in public and there was a “great Court at St. James’s to congratulate his Majesty on his Recovery.”<sup>167</sup>

Throughout all these reports and rumors about the king’s health, Frederick and the opposition kept their eyes open and their hopes raised. Even after George was up and about, the Prince of Wales and his supporters believed that the monarch’s “condition was more serious than it appeared.”<sup>168</sup> George attended the Lords on March 12, 1751 and gave the royal assent to a number of bills before leaving. Even though multiple papers, including the *London Evening Post*, reported that the king “appeared in good Health,”<sup>169</sup> Frederick “and his followers were unable to contain their glee in making unseemly references to the king’s continued sickness” when he appeared in the Lords.<sup>170</sup> Despite these whispered doubts about his health, George II outlived his son and survived until 1760.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> John Bedford, *Correspondence of John, Fourth Duke of Bedford Selected from the Originals at Woburn Abbey* (London: Longman, 1843), 2:74-5. This letter was, in all likelihood, dated in NS, which means that in the old Julian calendar of England at the time, it was written on February 28/March 1.

<sup>167</sup> *General Evening Post*, March 2-5, 1751, Issue 2691. *Old England*, March 9, 1751, Issue 363.

<sup>168</sup> Thompson, 207.

<sup>169</sup> *London Evening Post*, March 12-14, 1751, Issue 3650; *Penny London Post or The Morning Advertiser*, March 13-15, 1751, Issue 1394; *General Evening Post*, March 9-12, 1751, Issue 2694; *London Gazette*, March 9-12, 1751, Issue 9039; *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, March 9-12, 1751, Issue 793.

<sup>170</sup> Robin Eagles, “‘No More to be Said’? Reactions to the Death of Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales,” *Historical Research* 80, no. 209 (August 2007): 348. I have looked through the Journals of the Lords and Commons, Cobbett’s Parliamentary Debates, the diary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Egmont, and the diary of Lord Dodington without finding any reference to what in particular was said. The closest I have been able to come up with is in early February, even before the king is first reported sick, that Egmont spends a lot of time talking about the situation of the nation under a future king, but he never says anything overtly disrespectful of George II.

Less than two years earlier the opposition had not confined themselves to only snickering and making snide remarks about the king's health during parliamentary sessions. Instead they took the offensive and used the newspapers to spread their message to the public. On October 16, 1749 Attorney General Sir Dudley Ryder wrote to the Duke of Newcastle:

In pursuance of ... [the] letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> Instant, signifying that your Grace is pleased to desire my Opinion whether any method can be taken, to punish the publishers of the Newspapers, in which they have several times published that his Majesty was out of order when there was no foundation for such reports, and whether any method can be taken to prevent them from printing the like for the future. As the publication of such false News of his Majesty has a Tendency to disquiet the Minds of his Subjects, hurt publick Credit, and diminish the regard and Duty which they owe him; I think the doing it with such views is an Offence punishable at Common Law, and for which an Indictment or Information will lye. And the frequency of such publications is Evidence of such Wicked designs. But as every false report of this kind which may arise from Mistake only cannot be charged as a Crime, so it is very difficult to say how often it must be repeated in the same paper to make it Criminal, much less whether the Instances which have happened of this Nature the particulars of which are not stated are criminal. I don't know any method to prevent this practice, but by prosecuting the Offenders when they are guilty.<sup>172</sup>

In 1749, as at other times, there were false reports about the king's health in the public sphere and the government could not prosecute the publishers. This was an entirely different situation from what had existed under the later Stuarts. When Anne was close to death at the end of December 1713, even minor references to her health and the question

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<sup>171</sup> The opposition was clearly grasping at straws in March 1751. At that time even Horace Walpole, who was not a fan of George II, wrote to a correspondent that the king "is quite well again." See W.S. Lewis, ed., *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 20:231.

<sup>172</sup> State Papers, Secretaries of State: State Papers Domestic, George II, 1718-1760, vol. 111, part 1, 36/111, f. 115. The reason I do not discuss what the newspapers actually said in 1749 is that the newspapers in the Burney Collection do not contain anything that I believe was suggestive or blatantly descriptive in suggesting that George II was ill.

of succession in writing were enough to get Sir Richard Steele expelled from Parliament and Daniel Defoe prosecuted. Ryder's response in 1749 was quite different from that suggested in chapter one during Anne's reign, when erring on the side of prosecuting the printers responsible for publishing false reports trumped concerns with the possibility of a printer making an innocent mistake. The health of the monarch had gone from a subject not discussed in-depth or often in the newspapers under the Stuarts, even in times of political crisis, to a subject publically manipulated in an effort to create political uncertainty.

In the middle of March 1751, the citizens of England were concerned with the possibility of an impending political crisis as the newspapers reported, "We hear that his royal Highness the Prince of Wales is so much indisposed, that he is attended by his Physicians."<sup>173</sup> Those in the prince's circle knew he had been ill with a "Pleuretick Fever" since early in the month, although according to George Bubb Dodington, Frederick's Treasurer of the Chamber, by March 15 the prince "was out of all danger."<sup>174</sup> The press echoed this sentiment a few days later, with the *Penny London Post* declaring on March 18: "We have the Pleasure to inform the Publick, that his royal Highness the Prince of Wales is in perfect Health, and not attended by his Physicians, as mentioned in some of the News-Papers."<sup>175</sup> The problem with this report was that by the time it was printed, it was already outdated. Although on the surface Frederick appeared to be

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<sup>173</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, March 12-14, 1751, Issue 794; *Whitehall Evening Post or the London Intelligencer*, March 14-16, 1751, Issue 795.

<sup>174</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, March 14-16, 1751, Issue 795; George Bubb Dodington, *The Diary of the Late George Bubb Dodington, Baron of Melcombe Regis: From March 8, 1748-9, to February 6, 1761*, ed. Henry Penruddocke Wyndham (Salisbury: E. Easton, 1774), 96.

<sup>175</sup> *Penny London Post or The Morning Advertiser*, March 15-18, 1751, Issue 1395.



recovering, a letter from the Earl of Bath left open the possibility for some future problems. Bath wrote that the Prince of Wales was “out of all danger, unless he should relapse, which I hope he will be careful enough to prevent.”<sup>176</sup> This fear proved well-founded as the Prince of Wales died suddenly on March 20, ruining all the hopes and plans of the opposition.<sup>177</sup> In a fitting turn of irony, it was Frederick, not his father, whose health details filled page after page of the press in 1751. The *London Evening Post* provided the most complete description of the ailment.

We hear that his Royal Highness's Illness was first occasion'd by taking Cold in Richmond Gardens about three Weeks since, and being encreased by coming on Tuesday se'nnight from the House of Peers, when extremely warm, with the Windows of the Chair down, he was seiz'd with a Pleurisy; and as his Highness was judg'd in too weak a State to bear farther Bleeding, he was immediately blistere'd, and thought to be in a fair Way of Recovery 'till Wednesday night at Nine o'Clock; when, we can assure the Publick, from undoubted Authority, that his Royal Highness thought himself pretty well; but, about a Quarter before Ten, he was seized with a Pain in his Breast, upon which he express'd he had never felt any Thing like it before and complain'd that he perceiv'd an unusual Smell, like that of a dead Corpse, and then immediately threw himself back and expired; to the great Astonishment and Grief of his most excellent princess, who was present, and who had constantly attended him during his illness, tho' advised to the contrary by her Physicians, on Account of her Condition [she was pregnant]; an Instance this of conjugal Affection not to be wonder'd at, when we consider the amiable Character of the Princess, and the inestimable Loss she must be sensible of, not only to herself, but to the whole Kingdom; whose real Sorrow sympathizes with her Royal Highness on this melancholy Occasion.... His Highness's Stomach was open'd on Thursday, and there was found a large Abscess form'd upon the Lungs, which burst, and is supposed to have been the immediate Cause of his Death.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Eagles, 349.

<sup>177</sup> Horace Walpole, *Memoirs of King George II*, ed. John Brooke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 1:50.

<sup>178</sup> *London Evening Post*, March 21-23, 1751, Issue 3654; *General Evening Post*, March 19-21, 1751, Issue 2698; *General Evening Post*, March 21-23, 1751, Issue 2699. An article appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, XXI (March 1751): 130 entitled “The Opinion of the Physicians and Surgeons

Frederick had been popular and his death left a great deal of uncertainty and doubt in its wake. His son, the future George III, was still a minor and a regency bill was quickly passed. However, unlike situations that would happen during later Hanoverian reigns, there was not a large outcry of editorials and letters expressing concern for George II's health during this time of crisis. Instead, only veiled comments about the king's age appeared, including one passage from *The Gentleman's Magazine*. It read:

That the life of his majesty, the most gracious of princes, may long continue, is the wish of every protestant *Briton*. May it prevent the necessity of a regency, and the crown descend upon the head of a grandson of GEORGE II. in the full maturity of manhood! But ... this is more than we dare promise ourselves from the age his majesty has already happily attained....<sup>179</sup>

Few would have guessed that the king would make any discussion of a regency a moot point through his longevity.

### **Geriatric George**

In the final years of George II's reign, there were constant questions about his health. The year 1758 proved to be one of the most challenging for the king, as he was sick on and off for most of it, but especially during the second half. Over the last four years, his eye sight had been failing and it was known that foreign rulers, especially Frederick the Great, continually sought information about how the aging George was

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concerning the Distemper which occasioned the Death of his late Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, on the 20<sup>th</sup> Instant." It provided more graphic discussions of the "fetid matter" found in Frederick's chest cavity. Stories at the time to explain his death mostly centered on an injury of either being hit with a cricket or tennis ball in the chest, or Frederick's falling on his chest while playing a game. For more see Eagles, 349.

<sup>179</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, XXI (March 1751): 100-1.

doing.<sup>180</sup> Those in England thought that the king was going to die time and time again. In June 1758, his pulse had dropped so low that his physicians could not risk bleeding him.<sup>181</sup> On June 22, John, 5th Lord Berkeley of Stratton, the Captain of the Gentleman Pensioners, recorded in his diary that today was “His Majesty’s accession day; the last, I doubt, he will ever see: he is taking the bark after suffering an ague in his head; and the inflammation in his eyes is not abated. The flame of life seems quivering on a point and near extinction.”<sup>182</sup> At the same time, Lady A. Irwin wrote to her brother Lord Carlisle that there was good news regarding Hanoverian forces defeating the French but the king “...has no ears to hear it, and but one eye to read it, he having totally lost the sight of the other.”<sup>183</sup> The fall months of 1758 did not improve the king’s situation. By this time Berkeley believed “the king’s intellects ... impair’d...”<sup>184</sup> This from the same courtier who only a few months before had said that the monarch “walks across the Drawing Room as easily, & lightly as possible, & has an elasticity in his muscles, that is very uncommon in so advanced an age.”<sup>185</sup> At 74, mind and body were not working as well as they had in the king’s younger days, but accounts of the king’s declining mental faculties did not make their way into the press.

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<sup>180</sup> R. Koser, ed., *Politische Correspondenz Friedrichs des Grossen* (Berlin: Alexander Duncker, 1879-1939), IX:363.

<sup>181</sup> Thompson, 278.

<sup>182</sup> “Political Diaries of John Berkeley, 5th Baron Berkeley of Stratton,” Lincolnshire Archives, BNLW/4/5/4/5.

<sup>183</sup> H.M.C., *Fifteenth Report, Appendix VI*, 211-2.

<sup>184</sup> Thompson, 281.

<sup>185</sup> As cited in Nigel Aston, “The Court of George II: Lord Berkeley of Stratton’s Perspective,” *The Court Historian* 13, no. 2 (2008): 182.

For George's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, a celebration took place at St. James's on November 11, 1758, although the king's appearance at the ball led to a worsening of his health.<sup>186</sup> He was indisposed for a few days but appeared again in public on November 16. In fact, as the days went by, the newspapers provided the most descriptive accounts of his health during his entire reign, even though space was limited as the events of the Seven Years' War filled most of the newspapers' columns. The *Universal Chronicle or Weekly Gazette* reported on November 16, "there was a Grand Court at St. James's, and his Majesty appeared in public, being perfectly recovered from an Indisposition that had confined him for two or three days to his apartment."<sup>187</sup> The most detailed account appeared in *Lloyd's Evening Post*. It reported:

His Majesty got cold in removing from Kensington to St. James's; and by his staying too long in the ball-room on his birth-day at night his cold increased, and on Sunday was attended with loss of appetite, and next day with the symptoms of a slight fever and dizziness in the head. By taking the bark his Majesty recovered his appetite on Wednesday and rested well that night. Yesterday his Majesty was extremely well recovered to the sincere joy of all his good subjects.<sup>188</sup>

A detailed account of the physical ailments suffered by the king and the medicines he took was a large step towards talking more openly about the once private and sacred body of the monarch. This process was likely helped by the advanced age of the king and that

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<sup>186</sup> *London Gazette*, November 7-11, 1758, Issue 9842 and *Owen's Weekly Chronicle or Universal Journal*, November 4-11, 1758, Issue 32.

<sup>187</sup> *Universal Chronicle or Weekly Gazette*, November 11-18, 1758, Issue 33 and *Owen's Weekly Chronicle or Universal Journal*, November 11-18, 1758, Issue 33. Also see the private correspondence of Talbot Williamson to Edmond Williamson which verifies the accuracy of this account. F.J. Manning, ed., *The Williamson Letters 1748-1765*, Bedford Historical Record Society XXXIV (Streatley: Bedford Historical Record Society, 1953), 36.

<sup>188</sup> *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle*, November 15-17, 1758, Issue 208.

English society had become more educated and conversant in Enlightenment medical concepts through their frequent appearance in the print culture flooding the public sphere.

Unlike earlier health scares, including the one in November 1746 when the newspapers did not mention anyone believing the king was near death, in 1758 accounts appeared that, “On the report of his Majesty’s illness, several tradesmen began to expose their sable goods; and, in other places, some saving ones took advantage to buy cheap.”<sup>189</sup> The king’s age could not be ignored, nor that the Prince of Wales was now twenty years old, removing any concerns about a regency council being required if George II were to die. At the same time, the king learned that the rumors of his ill health had been hurting the government and its war efforts. As a result, George II summoned his determination to not let illness detain him from his duty and made appearances at court, although less frequently than before. He received praise for his efforts from William Pitt who noted the king’s “courage in coming to the government’s rescue.”<sup>190</sup> This intersection of a ministry’s survival and a monarch’s health was just a precursor to what occurred between Pitt’s son and George II’s grandson in 1788 to 1789.

Brought to the throne by parliamentary legislation rather than sacred proclamation, the Hanoverians experienced a demystification of monarchy even before they arrived in 1714. This process accelerated during the reigns of George I and George II through their support of enlightened medical techniques, most notably inoculations for smallpox, and their refusal to touch for the King’s Evil. Coupled with this was the way newspapers and magazines came to invite discussion of all facets of medicine while at the

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<sup>189</sup> *Lloyd’s Evening Post and British Chronicle*, November 15-17, 1758, Issue 208.

<sup>190</sup> Van der Kiste, 209.

same time continuing their reportage on all aspects of the royal family. However, unlike the subjects of the later Stuarts, citizens living under George I and George II were able to learn information about their sovereigns' health, and other members of the royal family, with publishers and authors having less fear of prosecution for their comments about the once illicit topic. But limitations remained. Full medical histories did not appear until after the royals' death, at which point the details became permissible. The best example of the changing perspectives and thoughts on sacred monarchy is the detailed engraving of the late George II's heart which appeared in the November 1762 issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, along with the observations of Dr. Frank Nicholls, who conducted the autopsy.<sup>191</sup> Explaining how these publications, focused on reporting all the details of a royal's health only after his/her death, were eventually replaced by citizens' demands for even more intimate health details while a king still lived, is a subject to which we now turn.

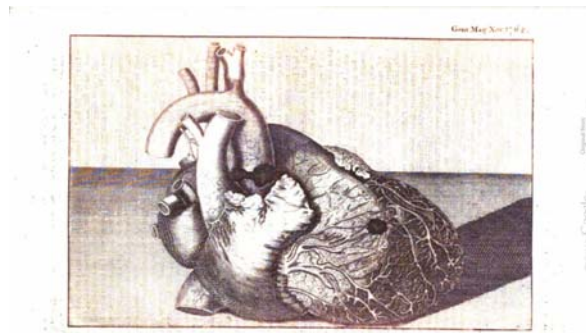


Figure 5. Engraving of the heart of the deceased king, George II. Anon engraver. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Volume XXXII. November 1762. Between pages 520 and 521.

<sup>191</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, XXXII (November 1762): 520-3. Although a similar dissection report was published when William III died and upon Frederick's death in 1751, the inclusion of the woodcut of the king's heart adds another dimension of how deeply the physical body of the monarch had become a commonly accepted subject of the press. The language used by Dr. Nicholls was more medical in its description than either of the earlier cases. As for the print that appeared in the magazine, and as Image 3 in this chapter, it showed "...the orifice in the right ventricle, and the extravasation covering the fissure in the aorta, exactly marked, as they appeared...."

CHAPTER FOUR  
A PRINCE, PRINT, AND PRIVACY IN  
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

While we offer up this universal prayer to the throne of the Supreme Being, with the ardency of pure religion and unfeigned concern, the minds of a nation who have so much loyalty and affection for their King must be filled with the greatest anxiety and solicitude for his recovery. It is then, an act both of justice and of sound policy to relieve that national anxiety as much as possible by the best daily information of the effects of the disorder and the prospect of recovery.<sup>1</sup>

When the HISTORIAN shall in times to come, resort to THIS PUBLICATION for contemporary illustration, let the universal LOVE and HONOR of the KING be cited from each evident circumstance! Popular Sentiment and Feeling never were so unanimous! All men through the country grieved—and every man considered the GRIEF, AS HIS OWN!<sup>2</sup>

Historians looking back on the events of October 1788 through March 1789, a period known as the Regency Crisis, see more than just claims that everyone felt grief as King George III struggled with illness.<sup>3</sup> With a medical condition his physicians did not understand, the king, recently experiencing a level of popularity due to his domestic activities and the end of the war against America, appeared to suffer from some type of delirium or insanity. By early November, the king was incapable of conducting political

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<sup>1</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, November 29, 1788, Issue 6103.

<sup>2</sup> *World*, November 13, 1788, Issue 585.

<sup>3</sup> The best account of the Regency Crisis is John W. Derry, *The Regency Crisis and the Whigs 1788-9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

business and the multitude of requests for additional information inclined the queen to make daily updates on his health available through a Lord of the Bedchamber at St. James's, a situation without precedent since at least 1688.<sup>4</sup> When Parliament began a new session on December 4, 1788, the MPs and Lords agreed to look for past precedents to guide them in this extreme situation, ultimately concluding that the steps taken to handle the mental illness of King Henry VI from 1453 to 1455 were inadequate for the needs of the eighteenth-century government. While the politicians turned toward parliamentary records, the body politic focused on the newspapers for the latest developments on the king's condition, the political future of the nation, and whether or

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<sup>4</sup> There is an extensive literature that deals with the medical problems faced by the king beginning in 1788 and stretching until his death in 1820 at the age of eighty-one. His ailments included gout, insomnia, delusions, violent physical actions toward his family and attendants, and finally deafness and blindness. The problems eventually led to his son George, the Prince of Wales, being appointed Regent in late 1810. The main point of scholarly contention today is defining the cause of George III's medical problems. Early works on the subject, including S.E. Jelliffe, "Some Historical Phases of the Manic-Depressive Synthesis," in *Manic-depressive Psychosis*, ed. W.A. White, T.K. Davis, and A.M. Frantz (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1931), 3-47 and Manfred S. Guttmacher, *America's Last King: An Interpretation of the Madness of George III* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941) suggested that George III suffered from manic depression. The diagnosis that has received the most support, although by no means unquestioned support, was put forward by two psychiatrists during the 1960s in Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business* (1969; repr., London: Pimlico, 1993). Macalpine and her son examined a number of sources that dealt with the king's illness, including the accounts made by contemporary physicians who attended the king, plus, the records left behind by the courtiers and politicians who were privy to the "behind the scenes" actions taking place at Kew and Lambeth Palaces. Macalpine and Hunter's conclusion was that the king suffered from porphyria, a metabolic disorder, rather than mental illness, as had frequently been suggested before. Perhaps the most famous and widely-known support for the findings of *George III and the Mad-Business* appeared in the epilogue of Alan Bennett's film, *The Madness of King George* (1994). Macalpine and Hunter's conclusions have also found support in the academic world, being cited in some of the best-known biographies of the third Hanoverian ruler, including John Brooke, *King George III* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972) and Jeremy Black, *George III America's Last King* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). On page 117, Black concludes, however, that "to assume a single explanation of George's condition is problematic." Other scholars, even from the time that *George III and the Mad-Business* first appeared, have disagreed with the claims of the authors. The criticism toward Macalpine and Hunter's conclusions can be found in: S. Brownstein, "George III: A Revised View of the Royal Malady," *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences* 6, no. 1 (1997): 38-49; Timothy Peters, "George III: A New Diagnosis," *History Today* 59, no. 9 (2009): 4-5; T.J. Peters and D. Wilkinson, "King George III and Porphyria: A Clinical Re-examination of the History Evidence," *History of Psychiatry* 21, no. 1 (2010): 3-19; BBC 2's *Fit to Rule*, 3-part television series (2013).



not the Prince of Wales and the opposition would assume some of the sovereign powers.

These same newspapers, both those that backed the ministry and the opposition, articulated a claim that the people of England had a right to know the most intimate details about the king's health, challenging the boundaries of the monarch's privacy, and influencing how subjects viewed their sovereign. These changes resulted, in part, from the celebrity culture which arose during George III's reign, and the inquiries into the king's Civil List that ultimately led to Economical Reform.<sup>5</sup> This chapter shows the culmination of the slow process of demystification, which began in 1688, during the Regency Crisis when the reading public gained unprecedented access through the newspapers to accounts and rumors of what occurred in George III's sickroom during 1788 and 1789.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This chapter touches only tangentially on the issues of Economical Reform. For more on this topic see: E.A. Reitan, "The Civil List in Eighteenth-Century British Politics: Parliamentary Supremacy Versus the Independence of the Crown," *The Historical Journal* IX, no. 3 (1966): 318-337; E.A. Reitan, "From Revenue to Civil List, 1689-1702: The Revolution Settlement and the 'Mixed and Balanced' Constitution," *The Historical Journal* 13, no. 4 (December 1970): 571-588; E.A. Reitan, *Politics, Finance, and the People: Economical Reform in England in the Age of the American Revolution 1770-92* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); George Rose, *Considerations on the Debt on the Civil List* (London: J. Hatchard, 1802); E.A. Reitan, "Edmund Burke and the Civil List, 1769-1782," *The Burke Newsletter* VIII (1966): 604-618; Warwick Funnell, "The 'Proper Trust of Liberty': Economical Reform, The English Constitution and the Protections of Accounting During the American War of Independence," *Accounting History* 13, no. 1 (2008): 7-32; Philip Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption': The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); David Lindsay Keir, "Economical Reform, 1779-1787," *Law Quarterly Review* 50 (1934): 368-385; E.A. Reitan, "The Civil List, 1761-77: Problems of Finance and Administration," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* XXVII (1974): 186-201; Ian R. Christie, "Economical Reform and 'The Influence of the Crown,' 1780," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 12, no. 2 (1956): 144-154.

<sup>6</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) and Marilyn Morris, *The British Monarch and the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) have mostly focused their attention on how the demystified monarchy was better equipped to handle the threats of republicanism during the French Revolution and afterwards, rather than the nuances of how the demystification occurred and the role played by an engaged and literate public in bringing about that process.

### Products of the Public Sphere

The extensive coverage given to the king's illness in 1788 to 1789 reflected not only the political importance of the event but also the exceptional growth in newspaper production taking place. The reign of George III is oftentimes associated with a "new phase in the development of popular politics and print culture" reflected in the level of growth experienced by periodicals.<sup>7</sup> In 1750, Michael Harris suggests, based on tax stamp records, that there were around 7.3 million issues of newspapers published in the nation.<sup>8</sup> A decade later, thanks to advancements made in provincial periodicals, stamps were sold for 12.6 million newspaper issues throughout the country. By 1801, the growth rate had reached 16.4 million issues for the whole of England.<sup>9</sup> At the start of George III's reign, within London, there were four daily newspapers and "five or six tri-weekly evening papers which were circulated in the country on the three main post days; in all there were eighty-nine papers paying advertising revenue in the metropolis."<sup>10</sup> Out in the provinces, there were upwards of thirty-seven newspapers, not counting the number of London-produced papers that eventually found their way into the countryside. On average, London newspapers sold 1,000 to 2,000 copies per issue, although by the 1780s

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<sup>7</sup> Hannah Barker, "England, 1760-1815," in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820*, ed. Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 93.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole*, 190.

<sup>9</sup> Barker, "England, 1760-1815," 103.

<sup>10</sup> John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 142. The first Sunday newspaper also appeared during George III's reign: *Johnson's Sunday Monitor* began publishing in 1778. For more on this development see Alexander Andrews, *The History of British Journalism from the Foundation of the Newspaper Press in England, to the Repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1968), 1:220.

some had circulations of 2,000 to 5,000 per issue.<sup>11</sup> Analyses of the contents of these publications and their advertisements suggest that they appealed to a wide spectrum of the social scale, not just elites and the middle class.<sup>12</sup> The same was not true for periodicals like the *Annual Register*, the *London Magazine*, and *The Gentleman's Magazine*, which had a decidedly middle- and upper-class readership, cost more, and had slightly, or in the case of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, significantly, larger circulations than newspapers.

Also circulating through the streets and coffeehouses during the reign of George III were satirical prints. As we saw in the last chapter, this type of artistic creation was not a new development during the reign of George III, but had been increasingly used to depict his grandfather and politicians, like Sir Robert Walpole, during the 1730s and 1740s.<sup>13</sup> However, the restraint shown by earlier satirists did not continue into the latter part of the eighteenth century. The bodies of politicians, the king and queen, and other members of the royal family, were all fair game for the famed artists of the day, who

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<sup>11</sup> Barker, "England, 1760-1815," 103-4. These totals do not account for the multiple readership of a single newspaper, which Hannah Barker and John Brewer have claimed ranged from ten to fifty people. Brewer, 148.

<sup>12</sup> Barker, "England, 1760-1815," 108. In terms of the number of people reading newspapers, in 1750 evidence suggests around 1/4 of the population of London read newspapers and by the 1780s, 1/3 of the population read newspapers. For more on this see: Hannah Barker, *Newspaper, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 43-72. Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30 n.7 suggests "literacy rates grew among trades and craftsmen from 60% to 85% in 1700-60, and among women from 30% to 50%." Also see Karl Schweizer, "Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in the Later Hanoverian Era," *Parliamentary History* 25, no. 1 (2006): 43. He argues that the content of newspapers was consumed even by the illiterate as reading, especially material related to politics, was a "communal activity, permitting those literate to share the contents of papers ... with others unable to read or afford a subscription."

<sup>13</sup> Satirical prints added to the public's interest in the bodies of celebrities, which was initially created through the expansion of the written descriptions of those famed bodies during the reigns of George II and George III.

included the Cruikshank family, Thomas Rowlandson, James Sayers, and James Gillray.

These individuals, each in their own time, would take over the mantle of master satirist following the death of William Hogarth in 1764 and helped usher in “the Golden Age of British Caricature.”<sup>14</sup> Although never as wide-spread as newspapers, political caricature helped move politics outside the walls of Westminster and into the streets, in addition to providing a “purpose analogous to state portraiture on a higher level.”<sup>15</sup>

A significant number of satirical prints were produced during the Regency Crisis. As Dorothy George notes, this was a period of time in which the satirical “prints illustrate a propaganda campaign of passionate ferocity.”<sup>16</sup> While there was much intensity surrounding the question of whether or not the king would recover, the malady that afflicted George III and its effects on his body and mind rarely received coverage in illustrated form. Despite his appearing in numerous political caricatures contained in the British Museum’s collection of satirical prints from both before 1788 and the latter part of 1789 onward, only one print, titled “Filial Piety!,” depicted George III’s body or health during the Regency Crisis.

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<sup>14</sup> Ross Eaman, *Historical Dictionary of Journalism* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009), 103.

<sup>15</sup> Vincent Carretta, *George III and the Satirists*, 52-3.

<sup>16</sup> M. Dorothy George, *English Political Caricature to 1792: A Study of Opinion and Propaganda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 197.

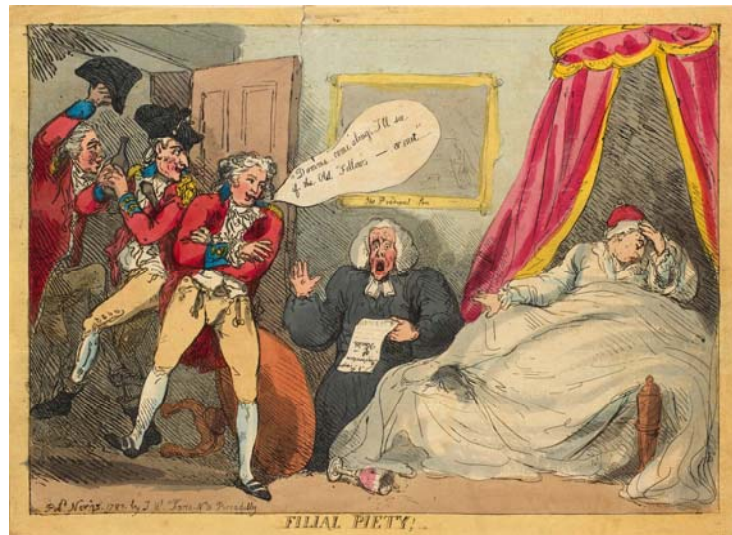


Figure 6. “Filial Piety!” Drawn by Thomas Rowlandson. Published by S.W. Fores. November 25, 1788. The Prince of Wales bursts into his father’s bedroom, with George Hanger and Richard Brinsley Sheridan behind him, saying ““Damme, come along, I’ll see if the Old Fellow’s --- or not’--” George III, laying in bed, turns away “with an expression of misery.” BM Satires 7378.

A number of arguments have been given for why only one of the eighty images produced during the Regency Crisis depicted the king’s body. The three major positions are that people had come to recognize the humanity of the monarch; that he had shown himself a worthy individual in his own treatment of the insane and should not be the subject of ridicule; and that, among the oppositional artists, there was a “fear of provoking sympathy for the king and his ministers.”<sup>17</sup> Although the prints of the Regency Crisis displayed the “crucial interplay of political intention and aesthetic mode in the dramatic development of eighteenth-century caricature...” they were of secondary importance to

<sup>17</sup> Jamie Agland, “Madness and Masculinity in the Caricatures of the Regency Crisis, 1788-9,” in *Drawing the Line: Using Cartoons as Historical Evidence*, ed. Richard Scully and Marian Quartly (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2009), 2.1-2.24; Linda Colley, “The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty, and the British Nation 1760-1820,” *Past and Present*, 102 (February 1984): 125; Morris, 142-5; John Barrell, *Imagining the King’s Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 54-5; Carretta, 166.

the amount of information provided in the newspapers.<sup>18</sup> Not only did the press provide more ways to comment on the events, but the coverage of the medical details and political matters in the newspapers was more extensive than in other forms of print or visual culture then available. This had not always been the case, however, as changes occurred in the first twenty-five years of George III's reign that allowed descriptions of his bodily ailments to reach such heights during the Regency Crisis.

### **Fit to Rule? The King and Queen's Health in 1761-1762**

George III came to power at the age of twenty-two. Horace Walpole's description of the young king suggested that 1760 was a break from the previous decades of Hanoverian rule.

No British monarch had ascended the throne with so many advantages as George the Third. Being the first of his line born in England, the prejudice against his family as foreigners, ceased in his person.... In the flower and bloom of youth George had a handsome, open, and honest countenance; and with the favour that attends the outward accomplishments of his age, he had none of those vices that fall under the censure of those who are past enjoying them themselves.<sup>19</sup>

In terms of his appearance, those close to the court, such as the Duchess of Northumberland, noted the king was "tall, robust, graceful, 'fair and fresh coloured ... his eyes ... blue, his teeth extremely fine. His hair a light auburn.'"<sup>20</sup> Such physical characteristics helped illustrate the ancient belief that a healthy external appearance

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<sup>18</sup> Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 44.

<sup>19</sup> Horace Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of King George III*, ed. G.F. Russell Barker (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1894), 1:3-4.

<sup>20</sup> James Greig, ed, *The Diaries of a Duchess. Extracts from the Diaries of the First Duchess of Northumberland* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), 35 as quoted in Jeremy Black, *George III America's Last King*, 44.

meant a leader possessed strong internal qualities that would help him succeed in the world.<sup>21</sup> For a brief moment it appeared that divine providence smiled down on the king, even in an era when sacred monarchy was a mere shadow of its former self. Yet, it was during his reign that the demystification of the monarchy increased to a new level due to his physical and mental ailments.

During the first year of George III's reign, the royal family remained quite small and the king's health was without trouble. In July 1761, after a lengthy search, his bride, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, made her way to England. Her husband suffered from chicken pox during that same month and despite the risks that went along with the infection, few newspapers noted the indisposition. Of the three that did, all included the exact same account around July 24: "His Majesty has been indisposed for a few days; but we have the pleasure to inform the Publick, that he is quite recovered."<sup>22</sup> Although newspapers developed into a powerful source of information by the time of the Regency Crisis, the first three years of George III's reign saw a regression to earlier types of reportage when health was involved.<sup>23</sup> In the case of the king, the reports were simple, lacked details, and appeared after his illness was over. The same was also true for the

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<sup>21</sup> Heike Omerzu, "The Portrayal of Paul's Outer Appearance in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Re-Considering the Correspondence between Body and Personality in Ancient Literature," *Religion & Theology* 15 (2008): 268.

<sup>22</sup> *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle*, July 22-24, 1761, Issue 628; *London Evening Post*, July 23-25, 1761, Issue 5262; *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, July 23-25 1761, Issue 58.

<sup>23</sup> At least part of this regression has to do with the king's age, while other factors included the end of the Whig Supremacy and the desire of the king to not rule through a single party. The opposition, as we saw in the previous chapter, was usually a driving force in getting reports on the king's health published. In the first few years of the third Hanoverian's reign, the opposition did not yet have a reason to exploit such a young king's health for political gain. Also, the coverage devoted to the Seven Years' War filled the majority of the space in the newspapers not already taken up by advertisements.

reports on celebrated individuals like the actress Mrs. Yates “of Drury Lane Theater [who] is so well recovered from her late Indisposition, as to be able to perform in a Day or two at farthest.”<sup>24</sup> The only other reference to health during the summer of July 1761 was an address made by the Right Worshipful Fellowship of Merchant Adventurers of England living in Hamburg, to Charlotte, who desired “to make your Happiness compleat [sic], may the first of all Blessings, a perfect State of Health, constantly attend our Royal Master, and your most Serene Highness.”<sup>25</sup> Such language was common for addresses during the reign of the Hanoverians but in a shocking twist of fate, Queen Charlotte enjoyed remarkably good health during her life, even as she bore fifteen children who survived infancy.

Eight months after her arrival in England, Charlotte was attending religious services on a Sunday in February 1762. The young queen became giddy and breathless before she was removed from the chapel and bled by her physicians. The *St. James's Chronicle* of February 20-23 reported, “the Queen found herself indisposed in the Time of divine Service, and retired from Chapel. But in a few Hours her Majesty grew much better.”<sup>26</sup> As was true whenever her husband was ill, recognition in the press came after the health problem had run its course. The queen recovered quickly enough and nothing more was made of her ailment, which was actually her pregnancy with the future George

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<sup>24</sup> *Public Advertiser*, July 20, 1761, Issue 8323.

<sup>25</sup> *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, July 23-25, 1761, Issue 58.

<sup>26</sup> *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, February 20-23, 1762, Issue 149. This apparently happened multiple times. On March 1, 1762, George Berkeley noted in his diary: “The Queen is certainly breeding, which was ascertained yesterday sennight, by her Majesty's being taken with a qualm, during Divine Service, and going out of Chappel.” “Political Diaries of John Berkeley, 5th Baron Berkeley of Stratton,” Lincolnshire Archives, BNLW/4/5/4/32.



IV, until June 1762 when the same complaint returned and she required another bleeding.<sup>27</sup>

Also in June 1762, a little before Charlotte experienced issues related to her pregnancy, George III began to display his own troubling health symptoms. It was soon after his birthday celebration on June 4 that newspaper reports appeared describing that the king “being indisposed with a Cold,” there was no drawing room at St. James’s on June 7.<sup>28</sup> By June 8, reports circulated that “we have now the Pleasure to assure the Publick he is quite recovered” and that the king was conducting his affairs of state without any issue.<sup>29</sup> The reports in the press were rather unreliable in this case, as those connected to the court did not show the same sanguine approach to the king’s recovery. On the night of June 6, William Barrington, 2nd Viscount Barrington, informed the recently dismissed Prime Minister, Thomas Pelham-Holles, 1st Duke of Newcastle, that he had just spoken with George III’s physician who had warned the sovereign and his consort that the king’s complaint of a pain in his chest was a cause for concern and “great care” which, if “things do not mend soon ... will be very alarming.”<sup>30</sup> During the afternoon of June 7, Barrington and Newcastle communicated again, noting a slight improvement in the king’s health but that “the Disorder has not given Way, in that

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<sup>27</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *George III: A Personal History* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 67-68. George IV was born on August 12, 1762.

<sup>28</sup> *London Evening Post*, June 5-8, 1762, Issue 5396.

<sup>29</sup> *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, June 5-8, 1762, Issue, 194; *London Evening Post and British Chronicle*, June 7-9, 1762, Issue 765.

<sup>30</sup> Newcastle Papers, Volume CCLIV, General Correspondence of the Duke of Newcastle May 26-June 20, 1762, Lord Barrington to the Duke of Newcastle, June 6, 1762, British Library, Add MS 32939, f. 190r.

Proportion which was expected....”<sup>31</sup> By the end of the night, these two individuals finally heard the king was on the mend, but not fully recovered.

Although individuals like Lord Barrington and Hugh Valence Jones “apply’d cautiously” to the king’s physicians for the latest news, this did not mean the king would abide by his physicians’ prognosis.<sup>32</sup> George III’s doctors became more optimistic regarding his recovery on June 8, but they still denied his plans to host a levee the following day, citing that he needed to rest more before putting his body through that stress.<sup>33</sup> On June 9, George III required more bleeding as he still complained of a problem in his chest, while a variety of reports and rumors about his health, both positive and negative, circulated throughout the capital for the next two weeks. During this time, people around the court remained concerned that the king’s symptoms were serious because, as Lord Chancellor Hardwicke noted, “...physicians don’t deal so roughly with such patients, without necessity.”<sup>34</sup> The accounts in the press became more positive, providing details about the king’s situation, including a report on June 12 that he was “blooded four Times during his late slight Indisposition,” that on June 15, that “their Majesties went to *Richmond* to breakfast, being the first time of their going abroad since his Majesty’s indisposition,” and that on June 16 that the Earl of Halifax kissed “his

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Lord Barrington to the Duke of Newcastle, June 7, 1762, f. 197r.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Hugh Valence Jones to the Duke of Newcastle, June 9, 1762, f. 246r.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Hugh Valence Jones to the Duke of Newcastle, June 8, 1762, f. 232v, f. 233r. Newspapers, including the *London Chronicle* June 10-2, 1762, Issue 853, noted that there was a drawing room on June 9 with the queen “but the King did not choose to come out so soon after his indisposition.”

<sup>34</sup> George Harris, *The Life of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke; with Selections from His Correspondence, Diaries, Speeches, and Judgments* (London: Edward Moxon, 1847), 3:283.

Majesty's Hand on being appointed First Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty.”<sup>35</sup>

Although the king's health was good enough to handle a subdued meeting with the Earl of Halifax, George III's constitution remained infirm to the point that he could not hold a levee that same day, even though “several persons of quality were at St. James's expecting a levee, but their Majesties were not at court.”<sup>36</sup> These individuals were, perhaps, led astray by the accounts in *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle* that reported “his Majesty is ... well recovered of his late indisposition....”<sup>37</sup> In reality, it was not until June 23 that the king actually held his next levee, when, understandably, large numbers of people attended to “compliment his Majesty on his recovery from his late indisposition” and to see for themselves whether or not the heir-less king was truly healthy.<sup>38</sup> Henry Fox, Lord Holland, summed up the period in these terms: “H.M. was very, very ill. It is amazing & very lucky that H.M.'s illness gave no alarm, considering that the Queen is big with child & the Law of England has made no provisions for government when no King or a minor King exists.”<sup>39</sup>

Despite the serious political implications during this period of ill health for George III, it is usually passed over with only a few sentences, if that, in biographies of

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<sup>35</sup> *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, June 10-12, 1762, Issue 196; *The Gentleman's Magazine* 32 (1762): 293; *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, June 15-17, 1762, Issue 198. Also see: *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle*, June 11-14, 1762, Issue 767; *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle*, June 14-16, Issue 768.

<sup>36</sup> *London Evening Post*, June 15-17, 1762, Issue 5400.

<sup>37</sup> *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle*, June 14-16, Issue 768.

<sup>38</sup> *London Evening Post*, June 22-24, 1762, Issue 5403.

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Lennox, *The Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox, 1745-1826*, ed. The Countess of Ilchester and Lord Stavordale (London: John Murray, 1901), 1:67.

the monarch. However, it shows the carryover, and in some ways the regression, in the reportage of royal health at the start of George III's reign. Three features are worth mention here. The first is that none of the newspapers reporting on the health of the king were published by authority. The *London Gazette* completely glossed over the indisposition of June 1762, both during and after. There was no mention of the cough, bleedings, or missed levees.<sup>40</sup> This absence of information in the government's official mouthpiece might explain why there was a certain amount of disconnect between the "reality" of the king's health for those talking to members of the court and the "reality" for those individuals only getting their information from printed reports and rumors passed through the streets and coffeehouses. The second feature is that the newspapers that did discuss the matter, in a rather vague and cursory fashion, quickly proclaimed the king recovered and that he was able to oversee all the political matters required of him.<sup>41</sup> The final feature is that there were no letters to the publisher or editorials which talked about the long-term ramifications of George III's health.

### **George III's Health in 1765: Foreshadowing the Regency Crisis**

The development of politically-active and reader-connected newspapers became more apparent during the on-and-off illness of George III in the first five months of 1765, as more in-depth reports and commentary appeared detailing the monarch's bodily

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<sup>40</sup> *London Gazette*, Issues 10215-10222, spanning from June 5-July 3, 1762.

<sup>41</sup> The health reports involving members of the nobility were also quite vague and usually discussed the individual's illness only after their recovery. The *London Evening Post*, June 8-10, 1762, Issue 5397, reported "His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury is confined with the gout in his hands, at his palace at Lambeth." *London Evening Post*, June 12-15, 1762, Issue 5399 noted "The Right Hon. the Lord Viscount Barrington, Treasurer of the Navy, who hath been dangerously ill, is now thought to be out of danger."

constitution. Beginning on January 13, 1765, George III had a rather troublesome cold that caused him to lose sleep, have an aching chest, and required that he be bled fourteen ounces.<sup>42</sup> Although he was fine again within a few days, some politicians who heard of his ailment, including Horace Walpole and Lord Holland, remembered that the king had experienced a similar complaint in 1762, and feared that the underlying disease was “...a consumption ... and that [George III was] not likely to live a year.”<sup>43</sup> Unlike the earlier illness in 1762, reportage about the king’s health troubles appeared as the ailment was ongoing, rather than after they declared the monarch recovered. It should come as no surprise, considering how religious George III was, that his absence from divine services at the Chapel Royal on January 14, 1765 first caught the attention of the press, with the *London Chronicle* reporting “His Majesty did not attend divine service ... being indisposed with a cold,” while the *London Evening Post* added that because of the cold the king “was blooded, and was not at Court.”<sup>44</sup> By the morning of January 16, George III was well enough to host a “splendid Levee at St. James’s, and afterwards a Council.”<sup>45</sup> At the end of the month, the king appeared fully recovered.

As positive as George III’s health seemed at the end of January, in a little more than a month’s time, on February 25, 1765, he was again “slightly indisposed with a

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<sup>42</sup> For an overview of this period see Derek Jarrett, “The Regency Crisis of 1765,” *English Historical Review* 85, no. 335 (April 1970): 282-315.

<sup>43</sup> William James Smith, ed., *The Grenville Papers: Being the Correspondence of Richard Grenville Earl Temple, K.G., and The Right Hon: George Grenville, Their Friends and Contemporaries* (London: John Murray, 1853), 3:115-6 and Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III*, 2:69.

<sup>44</sup> *London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, January 12-15, 1765, Issue 1259; *London Evening Post*, January 12-15, 1765, Issue 5805.

<sup>45</sup> *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, January 14-16, 1765, Issue 1173.

cold” that necessitated his “being blooded ... [and] was afterwards much better,” but the levee for the day was still canceled.<sup>46</sup> This round of ill health lingered longer than in the previous month and forced the monarch to be absent from the celebrations of the Feast of St. Alexander on February 27, and the March 1 presentation of the Welshmen and the Society of Britons on St. David’s Day.<sup>47</sup> The king’s absence was noticed at these events, especially with the newspapers stressing that, “His Majesty was so much indisposed ... that he was not at Court, but her Majesty and the Prince of Wales were, and received the compliments as usual.”<sup>48</sup>

The king’s complaint continued into March; when George Grenville, the prime minister, visited George III on March 3, Grenville found that there was “a return of fever and pain upon his breast” which required the king to be blooded yet again.<sup>49</sup> This explains why newspapers of the following day reported the sovereign as “not well enough recovered to attend the Chapel Royal.”<sup>50</sup> On March 7, more descriptive accounts appeared detailing the king’s ailment. Multiple newspapers reported “We have the pleasure to acquaint the Public, that his Majesty, who has been for some time indisposed,

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<sup>46</sup> *London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, February 23-26, 1765, Issue 1277; *London Evening Post*, February 23-26, 1765, Issue 5823.

<sup>47</sup> *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, February 25-27, 1765, Issue 1191; *London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, February 26-28, 1765, Issue 5824; *Public Advertiser*, March 1, 1765, Issue 9464.

<sup>48</sup> *London Evening Post*, February 28-March 2, 1765, Issue 5825. For most of March the newspapers stressed that it was just the queen or the royal family present at various events, without any reference to the king, or there were reports which specifically mentioned that the king was not in attendance.

<sup>49</sup> Smith, 3:120.

<sup>50</sup> *London Evening Post*, March 2-5, 1765, Issue 5826; *Public Advertiser*, March 4, 1765, Issue 9465.

is perfectly recovered. His disorder was a fever, attended with a difficulty in breathing. Caesar Hawkins, Esq; sat up with his Majesty three nights.”<sup>51</sup> Other newspapers were unsure about the king’s recovery, as seen in the *St. James’s Chronicle* report of March 9: “We are now informed, that a great Personage who has lately been very much indisposed, but was said to be recovered, is not yet out of Danger.”<sup>52</sup> Finally, on March 11, the king “received the visits of the several great officers of State, upon his happy recovery from his late indisposition.”<sup>53</sup> This visit was the first in quite some time, as the king “had seen nobody,” including his ministers, in weeks.<sup>54</sup> The events of 1765 show just how far parliamentary monarchy had advanced since 1688. The ministers, particularly Grenville, effectively managed the government throughout the illness, although George III reviewed petitions, made recommendations based on materials sent him by the Privy Council, and corresponded with his prime minister, including signing necessary paperwork.<sup>55</sup>

George III’s ministers were busy for the rest of March as the king could not fully overcome his health complaint. He continued to be absent from the Chapel Royal and

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<sup>51</sup> Hawkins was one of the royal sergeant surgeons. Yet another example of the privileged access they had to an ailing monarch. *London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, March 5-7, 1765, Issue 1281 and *London Evening Post*, March 5-7, 1765, Issue 5827; *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, March 5-7, 1765, Issue 625. *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, March 6-8, 1765, Issue 1195 even ran the report as its lead story, which was unusual. There was some debate over whether or not other physicians had attended the king as multiple newspapers, including *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, March 11-13, 1765, Issue 1197, reported that “during his late illness, [he] was attended by two Physicians only, viz. Sir Wm. Duncan, Bart. and Dr. Pringle.”

<sup>52</sup> *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, March 7-9, 1765, Issue 626.

<sup>53</sup> *London Evening Post*, March 9-12, 1765, Issue 5829; *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, March 9-12, 1765, Issue 627.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, 3:121.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:7 and State Papers, Privy Council 4: Minutes and Associated Papers, vol. 2 Minutes of Robert Walpole, Clerk of the Council, 1764 Oct-1795 Mar, 4/2, f. 14r.

drawing rooms, which the press pointed out. A representative report appeared in the *London Evening Post* of March 16-19, 1765: "Sunday the Rev. Dr. Lamb ... preached before the Queen at the Chapel Royal.... The King was not at chapel."<sup>56</sup> On March 21, the *St. James's Chronicle* reported that "His Majesty was ... better than he has been for some Days past" but not well enough since that same day other accounts appeared stating that "his Majesty will not go to the Parliament House to sign the Bills which are ready for the Royal Assent, but that they will be signed by Commission...."<sup>57</sup> Even though George III was still struggling to regain his complete health, the ministry had no problem steering the government, nor did the necessity of having bills signed by commission, which was becoming more common, worry individuals the way it had when William III used one in 1702. The success of George's ministers was even more commendable as during the same week in March 1765, the Lord Chancellor "on account of his indisposition" had to conduct business from his house.<sup>58</sup> The Commons was also deprived of one of its most vocal leaders, as William Pitt continued "so much indisposed at his seat at Hayes, that he has not been able to attend his service in Parliament."<sup>59</sup> All the while, the king's health continued to dominate the news with reports that, by March 26, he had been riding to Kew with the Queen before their planned move to Richmond on April 1, "for the benefit

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<sup>56</sup> *London Evening Post*, March 16-19, 1765, Issue 5832.

<sup>57</sup> *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, March 19-21, 1765, Issue 631; *Lloyd's Evening Post*, March 18-20, 1765, Issue 1200 and *London Evening Post*, March 19-21, 1765, Issue 5833.

<sup>58</sup> *London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, March 12-14, 1765, Issue 1284 and *London Evening Post*, March 12-14, 1765, Issue 5830.

<sup>59</sup> *London Evening Post*, March 19-21, 1765, Issue 5833.



of the air.”<sup>60</sup> On April 3, George III attended a cabinet council and demonstrated his restored health the following day with “a great Drawing Room” where “his Majesty received the Compliments of the Nobility and Gentry on his recovery from his late indisposition.”<sup>61</sup>

The reportage on the movements and appearances of George III was a continuation of a process begun under his Hanoverian predecessors. The royal family remained a topic of intense interest in the 1760s, although the situation was different since the family was relatively small at the time. During the first half of 1765, when George III ailed under various fevers and chest problems, the newspapers continually returned to the fact that the king missed events.<sup>62</sup> For instance, at the end of February, it was reported: “His Majesty was so much indisposed on Thursday that he was not at court, but her Majesty and The Prince of Wales were and received the compliments as usual.”<sup>63</sup> Other papers noted the monarch’s absence from St. James’s, royal hunts, the Chapel Royal, drawing rooms, and the birthday receptions for his sister Louisa Anne and the Duke of York.<sup>64</sup> In the case of birthday celebrations, it must have been obvious to the

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<sup>60</sup> *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, March 29-April 1, 1765, Issue 1205; *London Evening Post*, March 23-26, 1765, Issue 5835.

<sup>61</sup> *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, April 3-5, 1765, Issue 1207.

<sup>62</sup> The misreporting on the activities of the royal family eventually drove George III to create the position of the Court Newsmen who, beginning in 1803, supplied “the daily newspapers with accurate information on Royal movements, which had been approved and supplied by the Court.” Source is “History of the Court Circular,” <http://www.royal.gov.uk/LatestNewsandDiary/CourtCircular/HistoryoftheCourtCircular.aspx> (accessed June 14, 2014).

<sup>63</sup> *London Evening Post*, February 28, 1765-March 2, 1765; Issue 5825.

public how ill the king was, especially since it was customary for him to be present for the birthday parties, as seen by his appearance at those gatherings held for his youngest brother, Frederick William, at the end of May 1765 and his sister, Princess Caroline Matilda, at the end of July 1765.<sup>65</sup>

While there were differences in the coverage of the king's illnesses between 1762 and 1765, most notably that in 1765 reports appeared as the ailment progressed and not just after its completion, one similarity was that the accuracy of the details provided about George III's health was questionable. To those who learned of the monarch's constitution only from newspapers and rumor, and not through the benefit of being closely connected to the court, the reports caused uncertainty about George's status and what this meant for the nation.<sup>66</sup> Some periodicals, such as the *London Evening Post* of March 5-7, 1765, claimed the king "perfectly recovered," while accounts in the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* indicated that the king "continues still pretty much

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<sup>64</sup> For examples of the types of notices given about the king's absences and occasional royal family movements, see: *London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, March 2-5, 1765, Issue 1280; *Public Advertiser*, March 2, 1765, Issue 9464; *Public Advertiser*, March 4, 1765, Issue 9465; *Lloyd's Evening Post*, March 6-8, 1765, Issue 1195; *London Evening Post*, March 7-9, 1765, Issue 5828; *Lloyd's Evening Post*, March 8-11, 1765, Issue 1196; *London Chronicle or Universal Post*, March 9-12, 1765, Issue 1283; *Public Advertiser*, March 11, 1765, Issue 94671; *Public Advertiser*, March 12, 1765, Issue 94672; *London Evening Post*, March 16-19, 1765, Issue 5832; *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, March 16-19, 1765, Issue 630; *Lloyd's Evening Post*, March 22-25, 1765, Issue 1202; *London Evening Post*, March 23-26, 1765, Issue 5835; *London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, March 28-30, 1765, Issue 1291; *London Evening Post*, March 28-30, 1765, Issue 5837; *Lloyd's Evening Post*, March 29-April 1, 1765, Issue 1205.

<sup>65</sup> *Public Advertiser*, May 24, 1765, Issue 9589 and *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, July 20-23, 1765, Issue 684.

<sup>66</sup> Chapter five addresses the role that physicians and members of the royal household played in providing newspapers with the accounts of the king's health. They were frequently the source of information for the press' reports. For more on this see note 143 below.

indisposed.”<sup>67</sup> At least in the contradictory reports about the king, it was still clear that he was alive. The same could not be said for Henry Fox, Lord Holland, who in the course of a week at the end of February 1765, according to the press, went from being ill but better, to being pronounced dead, before finally having his condition upgraded to a recovery in a “fair way” by his physicians.<sup>68</sup>

Clearly the press was unreliable, but the demand for information about the royals, nobility, and politicians was great enough for publishers to risk the occasional false report or blatant lie, especially in an age when there was little concern with editorial corrections or excessive fear of libel prosecutions related to health claims.<sup>69</sup> Incorrect reportage was not just reserved for the king, but also other members of the royal family, including the Duke of Cumberland. In February 1765, according to press reports, he was at the same time both indisposed and never healthier.<sup>70</sup> Even in the midst of all the other news taking place, the reading public stayed abreast of George III’s health, as best they could, which is indicated in the type of reporting seen in the *London Evening Post* from the middle of March 1765. In discussing the health of the Duke of Gloucester, it was reported that he,

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<sup>67</sup> *London Evening Post*, March 5-7, 1765, Issue 5827 and *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, March 6, 1765, Issue 234.

<sup>68</sup> *London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, February 23-26, 1765, Issue 1277 and *London Evening Post*, February 23-26, 1765, Issue 5823.

<sup>69</sup> Libel and sedition remained prosecutable offenses during the reign of George III. One of the most famous cases involved the writing of John Wilkes in *North Briton*, Number 43, April 23, 1763. In his essay, Wilkes complained that he wished “to see the honour of the crown maintained in a manner truly becoming Royalty.... [but lamented] to see it sunk even to prostitution.” This resulted in his being charged under a general warrant for seditious and treasonable libel. For more on this see Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 19-52.

<sup>70</sup> *London Evening Post*, February 23-26, 1765, Issue 5823 and *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, February 23-26, 1765, Issue 621.

“still continues somewhat indisposed, his disorder is similar to that of his majesty, some days ago.”<sup>71</sup> What makes this description of the Duke of Gloucester’s health so telling is that the author did not feel the need to describe George III’s illness, most likely because any reader of the newspaper was already aware of what symptoms were displayed by the king during his current ailment. Another example of this type of reporting related to the physicians attending the monarch. Rather than reiterating what the king was suffering from during his illness, the newspapers simply assured the public that he had only been attended by two doctors, Sir William Duncan and Dr. Pringle.<sup>72</sup> This type of report showed that people were aware of the king’s ailment, in that they did not need to be told what he suffered from, but it also assured people that the sovereign was being treated only by his regular medical officers, and did not have a dangerous complaint that required the attendance of a specialist. This was a point of contention that aroused serious debate during the Regency Crisis of 1788 to 1789.

The duration of George III’s sickness was not the only way that the 1765 period of poor health foreshadowed some aspects of the Regency Crisis. There was also the topic of who would rule the nation, although this situation was more similar to the past than the future. Long regencies, especially when they involved a minor, were a cause for concern. Such regencies had usually resulted in indecision and abuses, so the

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<sup>71</sup> *London Evening Post*, March 12-14, 1765, Issue 5830.

<sup>72</sup> *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, March 9-12, 1765, Issue 627 and *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, March 11-13, 1765, Issue 1197.

apprehension expressed in a letter to the printer of the *London Evening Post* in early

April 1765, after George III had recovered, is understandable.<sup>73</sup> It read:

SIR, THE more amiable the Prince, the greater should be the fear of losing him. Youth is no assurance against death, and though happily the time may be very far off (which for the good of the nation I sincerely wish) before England shall lose its revered Monarch, yet those who love their King and Country cannot be without apprehension; a sudden illness, or a fall from a horse, may plunge the nation into the greatest grief and disorder, which must be augmented by the consideration of the tender age of his Successor, and the incertitude how, and by whom, these kingdoms are to be governed during a long minority. It were therefore wished that an act were to be passed this session to settle the Regency, in case so dreadful a calamity should happen; for, if no such wise step should be taken, what parties, what cabals, what dissensions, nay, what destructive consequences might not ensue? The settling of what may be *now* calmly and reasonably done, would *then* be a matter of confusion. *Now* the propriety or impropriety of any person or persons may be freely debated, which *then* could not be attempted with safety; therefore, for the sake of public tranquillity, national good, and the real interest of the whole illustrious family, it should be set about, and not postponed by a false delicacy. Since that rule will ever hold good. 'No man is an hour nearer death for having made his will.' -A LOVER of my KING<sup>74</sup>

Not only did this letter discuss the need to resolve any questions of a regency, but it also showed how conversations involving the death of a monarch had changed. Prosecutions took place under Queen Anne for even abstractly alluding to her mortality, whereas this letter's underlying theme plainly referred to the death of George III.

With the expansion of reportage available in the newspapers, politically-minded individuals had observed their sovereign ail for months with all the signs of consumption, a complaint which almost always produced death. We saw examples of great fear

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<sup>73</sup> George III suffered similar periods of illness at the end of May and July 1765 too, but both of these were of less than a week in duration.

<sup>74</sup> *London Evening Post*, April 2-4, 1765, Issue 5839.

involving a regency back in 1751 when Frederick Prince of Wales died and his heir was barely a teenager. George III's health scare in 1762 had caused its own level of concern, as seen in the writing of Horace Walpole. He noted, "Thank God he [George III] is safe, and we have escaped a confusion beyond that was ever known, but on the accession of the Queen of Scots – nay, we have not even the successor born."<sup>75</sup> Two differences existed in 1765: these concerns were expressed publicly in the newspapers and the king personally recognized the need to address the question of what would happen if he died.<sup>76</sup> On April 24, 1765 the king gave a speech from the throne that became the basis for The Minority of Heir to the Crown Act of 1765. In a draft of the speech, George III wrote:

The tender Concern which I feel for my faithful Subjects makes me anxious to provide for every possible Event which may affect their future Happyness [*sic*] or Security. My late Indisposition tho' not attended with Danger, has led me to consider the situation in which my Kingdoms, & my Family might be left, if it Should please God to put a Period to my Life whilst my Successor is of tender years.<sup>77</sup>

Despite two periods of troubling health during his first few years on the throne, and the establishment of the Minority Act, George III's bodily constitution was not a problem for over two decades. However, many changes occurred in the development of the nation and the public sphere between 1765 and 1788 which impacted how the reading public learned about the future failings of the king's mind and body.

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<sup>75</sup> W.S. Lewis, ed., *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 22:42.

<sup>76</sup> Smith, 2:70. Walpole states "...the Ministers had not proposed such a [Regency] bill to the King, but that his Majesty had to them, and had ordered them to prepare one."

<sup>77</sup> "April 20, 1765 draft of speech to Parliament," Grenville Papers, British Library, Add MS 57834, f. 52r.

### **Popularity, Celebrity Culture, and Domestic Monarchy**

Although George III came to the throne with a great deal of popularity, this began to wane by the mid-1760s and continued to do so until the early 1780s. A lingering belief that he was controlled by Lord Bute, attacks by radicals like John Wilkes, and questions about his stubbornness during the war against the American colonists caused George III's unpopularity to continue to decline until 1783. In one of the most vitriolic descriptions of popular sentiment towards the king, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, described the situation in 1775:

The bulk of the people in every city, town, and village where I have been do not so much aim at the Ministry, as they usually did in the last century, but at the King himself. He is the object of their anger, contempt, and malice. They heartily despise His Majesty and hate him with a perfect hatred. They wish to imbue their hands in his blood....<sup>78</sup>

There was undoubtedly some hyperbole in Wesley's description, but these same disaffected citizens were able to express their displeasure with the king and his ministers in the newspapers of the second half of the eighteenth century. Throughout the 1760s and 1770s, essay papers and pamphlets declined in popularity until being supplanted in the 1780s by newspapers that "provided their readers with the most up-to-date news ... their own commentary on events .... [and] the extensive publication of letters," which highlighted the political beliefs of the reading public.<sup>79</sup> Central to these developments

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<sup>78</sup> As quoted in Colley, *Britons*, 212-3.

<sup>79</sup> Barker, "England 1760-1815," 96-7. Also see Rocco Lawrence Capraro, "Typographic Politics: The Impact of Printing on the Political Life of Eighteenth-Century England, 1714-1772" (PhD diss., Washington University, 1984), 308-317. Capraro's examination of letters written in the 1760s and 1770s suggests that individuals from a variety of backgrounds wrote them, including party hacks, lawyers, clergymen, MPs, and other political office holders. Pamphlets were produced in large numbers during the war against the American colonists, but this was the last time they rivaled newspapers in importance.

was the increased frequency of the letters to the publisher/editor which was “one cause of a massive expansion in the volume of political comment carried in the London press.”<sup>80</sup>

The other major cause in the expansion of political content in the newspapers was that beginning in 1771, publishers were allowed to report on the debates in Parliament. This action helped spread political information outside the walls of Westminster, and to the wider public since the readers of newspapers stretched across the social spectrum, and were not just the elite and middle classes.<sup>81</sup>

The newspapers during the first half of George III’s reign contained more than straight-forward political discussion. The interest in the royal family we saw develop in the last chapter continued, and with the large number of offspring eventually produced by King George III and Queen Charlotte, there were plenty of stories to report. There were still reports of the royals’ trips to the theater or to the countryside, but the 1770s and 1780s in particular presented an opportunity to include the royal family in a new topic: scandal.<sup>82</sup> Although the Reverend Sir Henry Bate Dudley receives the most credit “for making social scandal an important element in the London press” at this time, it took more than just the royal family to provide all the necessary content.<sup>83</sup> The latter part of

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<sup>80</sup> Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France, 1620-1800* (London: Routledge, 1996), 40. One such letter, from 1781, addressed to George III from John Bull, stressed “it is the Birth-right of all free Britons to study public affairs, it is their duty to lay the result of their enquiries with candour and impartiality before your Majesty, and even the Public, when their views are laudable to your Royal interest, and the Good of their Fellow Citizens” as quoted in Barker, “England 1760-1815,” 95.

<sup>81</sup> Barker, “England 1760-1815,” 108.

<sup>82</sup> Frank Pochaska, *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 23. He writes about the increasing need to “supply the expanding market for royal news” during the reign of George III.

<sup>83</sup> Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press*, 93. Also see Lucyle Werkmeister, *The London Daily Press 1772-1792* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 61.



the eighteenth century also saw the advent of a cultivation of celebrity based on “a highly developed commodity culture, a wide range of technologies for the large-scale reproduction of images of the famous, a burgeoning print culture, and an increasingly large pool of literate consumers able to take advantage of it all.”<sup>84</sup> According to the definition by Graeme Turner, the process of becoming a celebrity occurs at “the point at which media interest in ... [a person’s] activities is transferred from reporting on their public role ... to investigating the details of their private lives.”<sup>85</sup> Members of later eighteenth-century London certainly fit these criteria and included individuals like the Duchess of Devonshire, Charles James Fox, the Duchess of Kingston, and the Duke of Cumberland.<sup>86</sup>

Far and away the most prominent celebrity of scandal during the 1780s, however, was the Prince of Wales. His association with Fox, his gambling, and his love affairs thrust him into the gossip columns. In 1780 the prince had a love affair with the famed actress Mary Robinson. Although the sexual dalliance lasted only six months, it turned

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<sup>84</sup> Simon Morgan, “Celebrity-Academic ‘Pseudo-Event’ or a Useful Concept for Historians?,” *Cultural and Social History* 8, no. 1 (2011): 106.

<sup>85</sup> Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2004), 8. Using this definition, I argue that the royal family met these criteria for celebrity more than anyone else during the later eighteenth century, although there were also actresses, businessmen, and politicians who met these criteria to a lesser degree.

<sup>86</sup> The Duchess of Devonshire drew interest because of her fashion sense but also her *ménage à trois* with the Duke of Devonshire and Lady Elizabeth Foster; Fox drew interest because of his gambling and mistresses; the Duchess of Kingston drew interest because of her sexual exploits which resulted in her 1776 trial for bigamy; the Duke of Cumberland drew interest because of his sexual exploits with Lady Grosvenor and the subsequent adultery trial he faced in 1769-1770, where her husband sued the Duke for £100,000 in damages. During the trial, parts of the love letters exchanged between the Duke of Cumberland and Lady Grosvenor were read aloud and they were eventually published in the *Middlesex Journal* and also a pamphlet entitled *The Genuine Copies of Letters which Passed between His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland and Lady Grosvenor*. For more on the Duke of Cumberland’s situation see Kristin Flieger Samuelian, *Royal Romances: Sex, Scandal, and Monarchy in Print, 1780-1821* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 18-19.

into a protracted affair when she threatened to publish the love letters sent to her by the prince. Despite her being paid off in 1781 and the letters never being published, newspapers, satirical pamphlets, and novels all based on the relationship between the prince (referred to as Florizel in these publications) and Robinson (referred to as Perdita) were available and attracted a wide audience.<sup>87</sup> Not learning his lesson about the need for better judgment and discretion, in 1785 the prince secretly married the Roman Catholic Maria Fitzherbert. Despite the ceremony being performed in secret, by May 1786 newspapers, pamphlets, and illustrations referenced the topic, whether or not it occurred, and the political implications since the marriage was illegal under the Royal Marriages Act of 1772 and the provision in the Act of Settlement of 1701 that prohibited those married to a Roman Catholic from ever succeeding to the throne.<sup>88</sup> These doubts lingered until the events of the Regency Crisis of 1788 to 1789 brought them back to center stage.

In many ways the childish and irresponsible actions of the heir to the throne benefited his father. During the 1770s and 1780s, as the king experienced some lessening of his popularity and periods of outright hatred, he also embraced a style of domestic kingship that allowed him to gain respect. In particular, George III's religious devotion, marital fidelity, fiscal responsibility, life at the Queen's Lodge at Windsor, and moral uprightness helped him appeal to the "religious, sober, frugal, careful, and dull" members of the upper class, the monied men of the middle class who helped Great Britain

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<sup>87</sup> Samuelian, 15-57. The names used in the letters were based on the main characters in the play *Florizel and Perdita*, which was the first time the Prince of Wales saw Mary Robinson, who was playing the main role of Perdita in the adaptation of William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.

<sup>88</sup> For more on this marriage and the print culture responses to it see: James Mulvihill, *Notorious Facts: Publicity in Romantic England, 1780-1830* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 42-49 and Samuelian, 68-71.

industrialize, and the “Methodists among the lower classes,” or collectively, “the most vital of his subjects.”<sup>89</sup> All of these qualities helped George III in an age when individuals, especially those involved in business and politics, faced greater scrutiny over their behavior in private since it demonstrated whether or not they could effectively serve the public.<sup>90</sup> As the domestic qualities of George III became more visible and widely discussed, the process of demystification accelerated.<sup>91</sup> One of the most widely reported events which demonstrated the exemplary conduct of the sovereign occurred in the summer of 1788 before the chaos of the Regency Crisis brought the process of demystification to its apex.

### **Celebrities and Health in June 1788**

Beginning in early June 1788, the king suffered “a bilious fever, attended with violent spasms in his stomach and bowels ... which lasted some days.”<sup>92</sup> Within five months of this illness, the coverage and discussion of the king’s health were the focus of articles in the press, coffeehouse chatter, sermons, and private correspondence. Although developments discussed in the above paragraphs help to partially explain the explosion of interest, George III’s journey from Windsor to Cheltenham to take the waters in the summer of 1788 refocused the eyes of his subjects on the importance of his health and its

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<sup>89</sup> Brooke, 116-117.

<sup>90</sup> For more on this topic see Clark, 37-52.

<sup>91</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 214. Linda Colley has shown that in the 1780s, as the king distanced himself further from real political authority, attacks against him and the monarchy lessened and members of the royal family became the target of mockery and ridicule, rather than the animosity experienced by them earlier in the reign.

<sup>92</sup> E.W. Harcourt, ed., “Memoirs of the Years 1788-9. By Elizabeth, Countess Harcourt,” in *The Harcourt Papers* (Oxford: Parker, 1880), 4:2.

political ramifications. It was believed that these waters would help cure his ailment from early June, which many thought was a case of gout brought to extreme levels because the king lived so abstemiously. Although he was mostly healthy while in Gloucestershire, his presence among his subjects aroused an interest in the monarchy that exploded when the sovereign became seriously ill later in the year.

In June 1788, the health of George III had a lot of company to contend with in terms of the public's interest. Ever since the publishing of parliamentary debates had become legal in 1771, they had dominated the press and accounts of what was being discussed in both houses filled much of the newspapers. Yet, it is telling of the importance placed on the health reports in these same newspapers that, with space at a premium, updates on the well-being of celebrities and politicians appeared with regularity. Sometimes the two types of reporting went hand-in-hand. Such was the case for Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the famous playwright and MP for Stafford, in the *London Chronicle* of June 10-12, 1788. One page covered the brilliance of his speeches on Warren Hastings which evinced "the perplexity and inconsistency of Mr. Hastings and his adherents." The next page shifted to the triumph of Sheridan in delivering such a compelling speech despite a concern for his "occasionally [being] afflicted with a dizziness, which for a time hurts his eye-sight, and is accompanied with a severe head-ach [*sic*]." <sup>93</sup> In the other house, the Lord Chancellor "was taken exceedingly ill .... His

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<sup>93</sup> *London Chronicle*, June 10-12, 1788, Issue 4934; *General Evening Post*, June 10-12, 1788, Issue 8514.

disorder is a violent cold, sore throat, and slight fever” which lingered for over three weeks and forced Baron Thurlow to skip his attendance at the Lords.<sup>94</sup>

On June 11, reports of George III’s illness appeared in this mix of celebrity health. Understandably, these accounts garnered more coverage and deeper levels of reporting than for the other celebrities of the day. The accounts of the latest indisposition began like the earlier ones, detailing that there was a drawing room at St. James’s that showcased the queen and two princesses, but not the king, because he was under the weather. By June 12 details emerged that the monarch, “from the heat and fatigue of Wednesday last at the review on Wimbledon, was so very much indisposed,” that his physicians now attended him.<sup>95</sup> They advised his majesty to not attend the above-mentioned drawing room with the queen and two princesses. These initial reports seemed innocuous enough, saying that it was only a cold and that the king was able to take an airing at Windsor and travel from there to Kew, which helped his recovery.<sup>96</sup>

Yet, continuing the trend established by earlier illnesses, the newspapers on June 15 began printing contradictory reports about the king’s health which were just the tip of the iceberg to what occurred during the Regency Crisis. The papers agreed that, in

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<sup>94</sup> *London Chronicle*, June 10-12, 1788, Issue 4934; *World*, June 14, 1788, Issue 456; *General Evening Post*, June 17-19, 1788, Issue 8517; *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, June 18, 1788, Issue 5692; *Whitehall Evening Post*, June 19-21, 1788, Issue 6404; *London Chronicle*, June 24-26, 1788, Issue 4940; *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, June 28-July 1, 1788, Issue 4234. The Lord Chancellor did not return to conduct his usual amount of business until June 30 and the newspapers kept reporting on his ill-health the entire time. For instance, the *London Chronicle* June 24-26, 1788, Issue 4940 reported, “The Chancellor’s late disorder was the piles, which he had to so great a degree, as to bring on a fever, which his physicians were obliged to alleviate by plentiful bleeding.”

<sup>95</sup> *General Evening Post*, June 12-14, 1788, Issue 8515.

<sup>96</sup> *London Chronicle*, June 12-14, 1788, Issue 4935 and *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, June 12-14, 1788, Issue 4227.

addition to not attending the queen's drawing room, George III canceled a levee the following day. The differences arose over what ailment had caused this cancelation. Some reported that it was just a cold; others stated that the king had drunk too much lemonade, while yet more papers suggested that the underlying cause was an "unsettled gout, which for some time attacked his stomach."<sup>97</sup> Still more reports surfaced trying to explain the current episode of poor health that kept him from making his usual appearances, including elaborations that the disorder was the wind gout which George III had "been often attacked [with] in the course of the last two years" and which the doctors had been unable to bring to a regular fit in order to resolve the problem.<sup>98</sup> Based on some of the reports, it is clear that the printers were aware of what their competitors published, and wrote articles in response. One such passage appeared in the postscript of the *London Chronicle* of June 17-19, 1788, which noted, "we are happy to assure the Public that his Majesty is perfectly recovered from his late indisposition, which was merely a severe cold, accompanied with a pain in his head, and nothing more; though several other complaints have been mentioned, as gout, sore throat, and a disorder in his bowels."<sup>99</sup> The newspapers had become more open in their discussion of illness, a product of the increasing celebrity culture of the period, but also as part of their effort to attract greater readership through the most accurate accounts.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *World*, June 13, 1788, Issue 455 and *World*, June 17, 1788, Issue 458.

<sup>98</sup> *General Evening Post*, June 14-17, 1788, Issue 8516.

<sup>99</sup> *London Chronicle*, June 17-19, 1788, Issue 4937.

<sup>100</sup> For an example of this expanded health coverage when the health of a monarch was not involved, see the example concerning Lord Mansfield in *London Chronicle*, May 26-29, 1787, Issue 4761.

By June 18 the king had fully recovered and was planning to attend Parliament in the coming days to prorogue the session.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, he was holding levees again, even if the number of people in attendance was unstable. On June 18 the levee was very full, no doubt because everyone wanted to congratulate George III on his recovery and see the state of his health, but by June 27, the levee “was very thin of company,” possibly because people were leaving London for the summer season.<sup>102</sup> The king was holding meetings with the Privy Council as well and having discussions with his prime minister, William Pitt the Younger.<sup>103</sup> The newspapers even reported that George III had resumed his regular regimen of “gentle exercise every morning on horseback,” which must have been further proof to the populace that their sovereign had regained his usual vigor.<sup>104</sup>

Even with the king recovery’s, the press was able to fill the “royal” space in the newspapers with commentary on the Prince of Wales’ body. As serious as the king’s health was taken, the same was not always the case when the constitution of the profligate heir to the throne was involved. In the summer of 1788, the Prince of Wales’ health appeared in the press in two ways. The initial report came in the form of a prescription purportedly from his doctor on June 14 for “frequent repeated exercise, particularly on horseback, in order to check the corpulency [*sic*] to which he seems

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<sup>101</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, June 21-24, 1788, Issue 6407.

<sup>102</sup> *General Evening Post*, June 26-28, 1788, Issue 8521; *General Evening Post*, June 17-19, 1788, Issue 8517.

<sup>103</sup> *General Evening Post*, June 24-26, 1788, Issue 8520.

<sup>104</sup> *World*, June 19, 1788, Issue 460.

tending.”<sup>105</sup> The other occurrence of his health appearing in contemporary periodicals was after an accident on June 16 involving a coach containing the prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert. The report was that his body was spared any serious harm, although his companion suffered a bad ankle sprain and was “so much hurt, as to be at present attended by Mr. Pott, her Surgeon, and Mr. West, her Apothecary.”<sup>106</sup> However, as today, the companion in the vehicle raised eyebrows. As we saw earlier, speculation ran high as to whether or not the two were married, so it is not surprising that some of the papers capitalized on the opportunity to poke fun at the prince, while seemingly describing the accident, while satirical prints took more liberties with the incident. *The Times* commented:

That Mrs. FITZHERBERT should *fall*, in the Prince’s sight, was no *small weight*: But that they should *tumble together* is not at all surprising; for when the royal reins were *loosed*, the *uncurbed steed* became *unmanageable*. It is a happy circumstance, however, that the only disagreeable consequence attending, is the discovery of a *swelling above the knee*, which time will naturally cure.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Felix Farley’s *Bristol Journal*, June 14, 1788, Issue 2068. According to Christopher Hibbert, *George IV, Prince of Wales, 1762-1811* (London: Longman, 1972), 106, in December 1797 the Prince of Wales weighed in at 17 stones 8 pounds (246 pounds). The Prince of Wales eventually wore pants with a size 56 inch waist.

<sup>106</sup> *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, June 17-19, 1788, Issue 4229.

<sup>107</sup> *The Times*, June 21, 1788, Issue 1104.





Figure 7. “The Princes Disaster or a Fall in Fitz.” Published by James Aitken. July 1788. An example of the speculations that ran rampant about the relationship between the prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert. BM Satires 7337.

The terms used to describe the accident show just how much the private actions of a celebrity could be pulled into the public spotlight. This type of story, seemingly about health, helps the modern historian tap into the discontentment of late eighteenth-century England in relation to George III’s prodigal son.

The second way in which the newspapers help clarify the way interested parties interpreted reports on the royal family’s health is reflected in a letter to the publisher of the *St. James’s Chronicle* from the June 28-July 1, 1788 issue. As opposed to the letter examined from 1765, this missive focused more on medical advice, although there was an underlying recognition of succession politics. It centered on the health of the sovereign and making sure that he received the best medical care possible so that he could have a long and healthy reign, which undoubtedly reflected some level of apprehension at the prospect of the Prince of Wales becoming king any time soon. The letter states:

SIRE, THE Papers of Yesterday informed the Publick of your Majesty’s Recovery from your late Indisposition, which must give real Pleasure to your Subjects in general.—It is said your Complaint is a *Wind-Gout*, and

that the Faculty are using their utmost Endeavours to bring it to a regular Fit (the most knowing and skillful Practitioners are too often very short sighted in many Cases) on which Account you are to quit your Exercise and abstemious Way of Living-I say, pray God forbid-for I can prove that Exercise, with abstemious Living, are the most certain means to have and secure Health. Your Majesty's Health and life is of the utmost Consequence to your Subjects at all Time; but more particularly at this present, when War and Troubles seem to be too near us; therefore keep on with your Exercise and abstemious Way of Living, for they are the most sure Guides to Health and long Life, both of which that you may arrive at shall be the constant Wish and Prayers of your Majesty's most dutiful Subject. –MEDICUS RUSTICUS<sup>108</sup>

While it is impossible to determine who authored this letter, in all likelihood it struck a chord with those “vital subjects” mentioned earlier who equated a healthy king with the good fortunes of the nation. A letter of this type was inconceivable in earlier reigns – no subject would have presumed to publically address Queen Anne or George II about their health. The letter from Medicus Rusticus shows that those in touch with print culture knew about the monarch's constitution and felt comfortable discussing the once illicit topic in public, a further sign of how far the process of demystification had progressed before the Regency Crisis.

### **George III Takes the Waters and People Read All About It**

In early July 1788, at the same time that Medicus Rusticus' letter appeared in the newspaper, information affecting the status of a healthy George III began circulating. On July 3, the king's chief Physician to the Person, Sir George Baker, suggested “the King's health which has for sometime past, having been in an indifferent state, a mineral water

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<sup>108</sup> *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, June 28-July 1, 1788, Issue 4234. In eighteenth-century England there was a revival of discussions about exercise and the connections between mental and physical health. For more information see: Robert Batchelor, “Thinking about the Gym: Greek Ideals, Newtonian Bodies and Exercise in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 2 (2012): 185-197.

has been judged necessary” at Cheltenham for up to six weeks so the king could drink his fill.<sup>109</sup> Although by July 12 the king was healthy enough to hold levees and council meetings, the royal family and its small contingent of attendants and servants set off that day in the hopes of staving off any future illnesses.<sup>110</sup> The five weeks the king, queen, and some of the royal family spent in Cheltenham were important because, while the trip began as a way for the king to sustain his physical well-being, the real end result was that more of his subjects than just those living around the capital had an opportunity to see, interact with and read about the actions and personality of the sovereign.

George III’s trip to Cheltenham was the first progress conducted by an English monarch in the eighteenth century that allowed a wider segment of people to both interact and understand the person on the throne, in large part because of the widespread reportage of the journey.<sup>111</sup> As Linda Colley has argued, in order for a monarchy to be splendid and appreciated, it must be seen.<sup>112</sup> This is a good definition but it can be improved upon. In addition to actually being seen, a difficulty for any monarch before the invention of photography and broadcasting, reading about the sovereign could have an equally powerful role in shaping the view a people had of their king. George III did not like to travel to show himself to his subjects, while official portraits and satirical prints

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<sup>109</sup> *General Evening Post*, July 1-3, 1788, Issue 8523.

<sup>110</sup> *General Evening Post*, July 10-12, 1788, Issue 8526.

<sup>111</sup> The last progress by a British monarch was when Anne visited Newmarket in September and October of 1707. Between the limitations and smaller size of the press at the time, there were not many details of this progress published. Even in the expanded press under George I and George II, they usually did not go on progresses except for the port towns they passed on their ways to and from Hanover, although each visited Newmarket on at least one occasion.

<sup>112</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 235.

presented only a static image. Newspapers on the other hand, provided a daily update of news and interesting material. Applying the addition of reading about a sovereign to Colley's definition, Cheltenham allowed the king to be "seen" and helped establish an open current of information to the populace about his activities and status, a development which made the more restricted flow of information regarding his health during the Regency Crisis a point of contention.

The newspaper accounts of the trip to Cheltenham in mid-July 1788 began by discussing the king's need to drink the waters for his health – the reason he was making the journey in the first place.<sup>113</sup> Satirical prints were even made depicting the king indulging excessively on the Cheltenham water.



Figure 8. "A Scene at Cheltenham." Published by S.W. Fores. July 28, 1788. The two men working the pump say "Zoons a will suke en Dry" while one of the princesses standing behind George III proclaims to the other "My Papa will leave none for us." BM Satires 7358.

By the end of July though, the accounts changed from simple reports on how the spa waters were helping George III, to the inclusion of the minutia of his day-to-day

<sup>113</sup> *General Evening Post*, July 5-8, 1788, Issue 8525 and *General Evening Post*, July 12-15, 1788, Issue 8527.

activities. From the correspondence between the antiquarian Anthony Storer and the diplomat William Eden, it is possible to gain a sense of how people were reacting to these reports. To those engaged with print culture, Storer wrote to Eden on August 8, “there is nothing, however minute and unimportant it may be, which his Majesty does at Cheltenham, but what the newspapers report to us daily, so that we know now more how he passes his time than if he were living at Buckingham-house.”<sup>114</sup> There is no doubt where these reports came from, as Fanny Burney described “news-mongers’ drawing up” around the royal family and their followers while out walking in Cheltenham.<sup>115</sup> The encounters that George III had with these reporters and newspaper correspondents were just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the amount of interactions he would have with his subjects while in Gloucestershire, many of which were recounted in the press.<sup>116</sup>

In some cases the accounts in the newspapers described the disappointment of the hundreds of country residents who came, “notwithstanding to the wetness of the Day, upwards of 20 Miles to see their Sovereign. But when he did come, he passed so swift ... that few had even a transient Glance of him, and those few were much dissatisfied

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<sup>114</sup> R.J. Eden, ed., *The Journal and Correspondence of William, Lord Auckland* (London: Richard Brentley, 1861), 2:225-6. As an example of the minutia, the Storer letter continues: “He [the king] eats cherries, it is found out, like other men, but walks further than most.”

<sup>115</sup> Fanny Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madame D’Arblay*, ed. Charlotte Barrett (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), 4:167.

<sup>116</sup> The experience at Cheltenham was different than when the king and queen stayed at Windsor. Although they were accessible on the terraces and moved “with the freedom of a small squire in a country village,” when they were at the Queen’s Lodge, the residents of Windsor “never trespassed on the royal privacy.” First quotation is from John Martin Robinson, *Windsor Castle: The Official Illustrated History* (London: Royal Collection, 2001), 59. Second quotation is from Olwen Hedley, “George III and Life at Windsor,” *History Today* 25, no. 11 (November 1975), 754. Additionally, the social interactions of the monarch and his consort at Windsor did not receive in-depth coverage in the press because they were routine.

[sic].”<sup>117</sup> Other reports commented on people who unknowingly talked with the sovereign for hours about sheep or the price of crops, while there was the story of the peasant who walked twenty miles just to watch the king drink the health-restoring spa water, even though the peasant wished George III “could see me drink ale! would do him more good.”<sup>118</sup> On July 17 another account surfaced that, even though the queen and king walked around the well every morning while taking the water, “No Person now goes to see them.” The town’s focus had shifted to the celebrated actress Mrs. Mary Wells, who was there to perform in front of the monarch and his consort. The most significant part of Mrs. Wells’ arrival, however, was that she was unwell and nursing an injury which the *St. James’s Chronicle* mentioned “with the utmost concern and with heartfelt Anxiety and Grief ... that she has had the Misfortune to *sprain her Ankle!*”<sup>119</sup> Although Mrs. Wells attracted most of the attention, occasional references in the newspapers to the health of the king and the rest of the royal family continued until early August when the focus of the reports shifted to the people and places visited by the royals.<sup>120</sup> This included cathedrals, infirmaries, and pin and porcelain manufacturers.<sup>121</sup> George’s interest in these

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<sup>117</sup> *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, July 12-15, 1788, Issue 4240.

<sup>118</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, July 15-17, 1788, Issue 6417 and *General Evening Post*, July 17-19, 1788, Issue 8529.

<sup>119</sup> *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, July 15-17, 1788, Issue 4241.

<sup>120</sup> *World*, August 2, 1788, Issue 498; *General Evening Post*, August 7-9, 1788, Issue 8539; *General Evening Post*, August 12-14, 1788, Issue 8541; *London Chronicle*, August 14-16, 1788; *London Chronicle*, August 16-19, 1788, Issue 4963.

<sup>121</sup> *London Chronicle*, July 29-31, 1788, Issue 4955 and *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, July 24-26, 1788, Issue 4245. George III was already well-regarded for his treatment of the sick, especially the mentally insane. The care he showed for the insane Margaret Nicholson in August

activities highlighted the domestic qualities that helped him appeal to those reading about his progress through the country towns.

August 16 found the royal family back at Windsor and the subjects of George III could rest comfortably knowing that:

the King's health is not only perfectly restored, but that he looks better than he has done for several months before his late illness: the fine air which he is almost continually passing through, the salubrity [*sic*] of the waters, the relaxation from business, not to mention the new scenes of life that are every hour presented to him, all are thought to have contributed to this happy change.<sup>122</sup>

But even more had changed during the five weeks the king and part of his family spent away from London. It appears the way some people felt about the monarch, and their desire to learn every detail about him, had increased in approval and volume. The accounts in the newspapers reflect the great affection that existed for George III by the end of the 1780s, which only grew stronger by witnessing the actions of the healthy monarch. While still in Cheltenham, the *General Evening Post* of July 19-22, 1788 reported, "their Majesties walk about in the most easy manner. 'Tis Royalty descending to win the hearts of loyal subjects, and to rivet still closer the ties of fidelity and love."<sup>123</sup> A week later, the same newspaper observed, "the present Royal *tour*, it is to be hoped, will produce something more than health and recreation. It will shew his Majesty the happiness, prosperity, and loyalty, of his people; and his people, in turn, will be

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1786, when she tried to assassinate the king, has led some to speculate this helped limit the attacks on him during his own period of "insanity" during the Regency Crisis.

<sup>122</sup> *General Evening Post*, July 24-26, 1788, Issue 8532.

<sup>123</sup> *General Evening Post*, July 19-22, 1788, Issue 8530.

personally convinced of their Sovereign's affection, and confidence in them."<sup>124</sup> *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* of August 2, 1788 expressed the belief that "the popularity which the King has acquired by his trip to Cheltenham must be equally pleasing to himself and the public; and confirms the advice ... 'If your Majesty would choose to be a great King, you must reign in the hearts of your people.'"<sup>125</sup> Finally, with the prospect of future tours throughout the country to maintain the king's health already proposed, the *St. James's Chronicle* of August 14-16, 1788 suggested a future including a healthful George III who would bring an end to party strife: "The Tours through several Parts of his dominions, which the Health of his Majesty may dispose him to take, may be attended with beneficial Consequences, in abating the Rancour of Parties a Species of Jealousy which Factions have fostered between the Crown and the People."<sup>126</sup> Unfortunately, that very same circumstance, the king's health, soon led to one of the most factious and contested periods in eighteenth-century England.

### **George III's Health in the Early Autumn of 1788**

Beginning around October 17, 1788, the health of George III deteriorated after his productive and healthy trip to Cheltenham. However, no one could have predicted the severity or duration of illness that was about to occur. Those close to the royal family worried about the king's well-being since, as Fanny Burney wrote in her diary on October 17, the monarch "has not been quite well some time" and "there is an uncertainty

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<sup>124</sup> *General Evening Post*, July 31-August 2, 1788, Issue 8536.

<sup>125</sup> *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, August 2, 1788, Issue 2075.

<sup>126</sup> *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, August 14-16, 1788, Issue 4254.



as to his complaint not very satisfactory; so precious, too, is his health.”<sup>127</sup> The next day her entry was optimistic, noting that George III was much better and the planned relocation from Kew to Windsor would soon occur. The situation quickly deteriorated, as on October 20 he became very ill before recovering slightly. The future Madame d’Arblay spent most of that day receiving inquiries from people concerned with the king’s health because news of “his least illness spreads in a moment.”<sup>128</sup> Undoubtedly, this news was carried abroad by courtiers, physicians, and servants as seen by the efforts taken to lock down Windsor during the king’s illness. Fanny Burney wrote to Miss Cambridge on November 30, 1788, informing her she should neither try to visit Windsor herself nor send a servant, “for I have found it was much desired to keep off all who might carry away any intelligence.”<sup>129</sup>

Burney was not the only person to be aware of the state of the sovereign’s health. By October 18 the newspapers, much as they had for earlier periods of illness during the reign, gave considerable attention to George’s health.<sup>130</sup> Reports noted the king canceling

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<sup>127</sup> Burney, 4:270.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 4:272.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 4:350.

<sup>130</sup> Newspaper affiliations during the Regency Crisis changed on occasion. Ministry papers included the *London Evening Post*, the *St. James’s Chronicle*, the *Whitehall Evening Post*, and *The Times*. Opposition papers included the *Morning Herald*, the *General Advertiser*, the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, the *Morning Post*, and the *World*. The *Morning Chronicle* was relatively neutral and enjoyed presenting the arguments of both the ministry and opposition during the crisis. Some newspapers, specifically the *Morning Post* (January 1789) and the *World* (December 1788), were originally ministry papers, but the opposition bought them off because they feared the attacks in those periodicals. For more details on the purchasing of the *Morning Post* by the opposition because they continued to print stories about the relationship between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert, see Arthur Aspinall, *Politics and the Press c. 1780-1850* (London: Home & Van Thal Ltd, 1949), 274-275 and Harcourt, 4:140 and 4:154. For the sale of the *World* to the opposition at the end of December 1788, see: Bland Burges Papers, James

levees and “that his Majesty’s indisposition is a cold,” attributed to the sharpness of the air at Windsor.<sup>131</sup> Other publications speculated that George’s abstemiousness was, still, the root cause of all his health problems.<sup>132</sup> On October 21 the *London Chronicle* claimed “His Majesty’s health is in a fair way of being perfectly restored” while speculating this restoration would cause joy to all loyal subjects since the “amiable virtues of our Sovereign have so much endeared him to his people, that the most trifling indisposition gives a serious alarm to the nation at large.”<sup>133</sup> That same day, however, a detailed account appeared in the *Whitehall Evening Post* which painted a bleaker picture of George III’s constitution.

His Majesty remains at Kew. His disorder is the rheumatic gout; on which account both feet are wrapt in flannel. His Majesty is attended every morning by Sir G. Baker, who is at present very doubtful, whether his Royal patient will be sufficiently recovered, to be present at the Levee to morrow..... His Majesty having been advised, pending his bilious complaints, to abstain from violent exercise of every kind, there will be no stag hunting at Windsor this day. The very troublesome indigestions and flatulencies which are the King’s chief complaints, are, in a person of his Majesty’s age, generally pronounced by the faculty to be the forerunner of the gout. The physical endeavours are to keep the humour out of the head and stomach, and fix it upon the extremities.<sup>134</sup>

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Bland Burges to Anne Bland Burges, January 10, 1789, Dept. 8 Bland Burges, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, f. 149r; Lady Elizabeth Foster, “Transcript of a Journal of Events of My Own Time Kept by Lady Elizabeth Foster (5 Nov. 1788-10 Jan. 1789),” British Library, Add MS 41579, f. 17r.

<sup>131</sup> *London Chronicle*, October 16-18, 1788, Issue 4990.

<sup>132</sup> *Bath Chronicle*, October 16, 1788, Issue 1455; *London Chronicle*, October 18-21, 1788, Issue 4991.

<sup>133</sup> *London Chronicle*, October 18-21, 1788, Issue 4991.

<sup>134</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, October 18-21, 1788, Issue 6457.

Perhaps in one of the clearest indicators of the importance surrounding the king's health, the subject went from being tucked inside the papers to literally being front page news.<sup>135</sup>

What occurred over the next four months was an explosion of information related to the health of George III and the implications this had for the nation as a whole. Before the end of October 1788, complaints appeared in the editorials and reports centering on the information available to the public, or, in some people's and papers' opinions, the lack thereof. The combination of earlier accounts of the king's illnesses, the availability of information pertaining to the royal family because of the Cheltenham tour, and the importance of print culture in an age of celebrity, at least some of his subjects felt entitled to read the whole story in print. And they expressed this belief before the severity of George's illness was recognized by anyone, which means it was a belief not based solely on political interest.<sup>136</sup> The October 23-25, 1788 issue of the *St. James's Chronicle* stated:

In a political and in a moral Light, the Health of the Sovereign of a Kingdom is certainly one of the first national objects, whether that Sovereign be the Tyrant or the Guardian Angel of the People. In this Country, therefore, which is ruled by a Monarch so greatly and so justly beloved, the Anxiety of the Publick must be proportionally great, when his Health is rather in an indifferent State; and that this is the Case at present is but too well known. That Our Readers, however, may not think the Matter worse than it is, and to prevent their being alarmed at the exaggerated and mistaken Accounts which have appeared in some Papers,

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<sup>135</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, October 21, 1788, Issue 6069. Soon thereafter, the reports on the king's health appeared as the lead story on the front page in some newspapers, usually quoting from the *London Gazette*. This was clearly an indication of how important the publishers believed this information to be, and most likely reflect an interest by their readers in viewing this material as quickly as possible.

<sup>136</sup> While George III had been known to be sick for a few days, he was still able to hold a levee on October 24, the day after the article in the *St. James's Chronicle* appeared, which meant people had every reason to believe that he would recover and this indisposition, which displayed all the same symptoms as his previous ailments, would pass in the near future. No one understood that the Regency Crisis was going to emerge in the coming months.

we have made it our Business particularly to enquire, and we now present to them the following Relation of the King's Indisposition, assuring them that they may depend on its Authenticity:--For some little Time past, his Majesty has had a slight Complaint in his Bowels, not the Gout as was reported; but last Friday, he was much better, and venturing to eat some Fruit, took rather too large a Quantity of Pears; the Consequence was a violent Cholick: But, it is with pleasure that we inform the Publick, that by the Help of his Physicians, his Majesty was last Night (Wednesday) so much better, as to leave no further Room to doubt an immediate and entire Recovery.<sup>137</sup>

Through the end of October and the beginning of November 1788, the accounts of the king's health, as already noted, were at times contradictory. As the state of George III's constitution continued to fluctuate, new ideas about the cause were printed daily, oftentimes confusing the populace. For instance, between October 22 and October 23, three different accounts, all claiming to be from reliable sources, were reported by three different papers as to the current state of the king's constitution. The *Whitehall Evening Post* claimed that the monarch "has no gout ... [but] rather pain ... in his bowels," while the *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* reported that George III labored under "a regular paroxysm of the gout" which had finally been fixed in his feet, and the *World* reluctantly informed the public that indeed the king was dealing with gout which had not been fixed in his feet but instead "flies to his stomach."<sup>138</sup> In an apparent effort to calm the public and provide some insight into his actual health, the king held a levee on Friday, October 24. As described in the *London Chronicle*:

...the reports which had been circulated of his health and anxiety that had appeared in every person to know the true cause of it, was the chief reason

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<sup>137</sup> *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, October 21-23, 1788, Issue 4282.

<sup>138</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, October 21-23, 1788, Issue 6458; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, October 22, 1788, Issue 4867; *World*, October 22, 1788, Issue 566.

of his attending the Levee on Friday last. When he came there, he told his friends he was come merely to shew himself, and to discredit the rumours that had gone abroad of the state of his health. In respect to constitutional health, the King has not been better for a long time.<sup>139</sup>

Any suggestion of the sovereign being in good health was cast into doubt when, on October 27, Sir George Baker, the king's chief physician, held what amounted to a press conference at St. James's where he informed those gathered, who apparently reported it to the newspapers, of the "truly disagreeable intelligence of his Majesty having had a relapse."<sup>140</sup> This report opened the floodgates for more speculation on what was really wrong with the king, with the new suggestions included dropsy, too little wine, too much exercise, too much fruit, too much cold water, and too many vegetables.<sup>141</sup> Although reporting on his illness, these accounts show the process of demystification at work as they were also public criticisms of the king's personal habits, an act that earlier in the century would have almost certainly resulted in the arrest and prosecution of the outspoken individual(s). Even among the well-connected, like Lord Hawkesbury, president of the Board of Trade, who spoke to Pitt and Baker and learned that George III complained of his flannels and feared that he would always be confined to them, when it came to the king's "real Disorder," Hawkesbury was "not able to discover but ...

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<sup>139</sup> *London Chronicle*, October 25-28, 1788, Issue 4994. According to Richard Plantagenet Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Greville, ed., *Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George III* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853), 1:431-2, George Grenville wrote a letter to his brother with a similar summary, that George III appeared at the levee "with a view of putting an end to the stories [that he was ill] that were circulated with much industry." Macalpine and Hunter, 19, references a letter that George III wrote to William Pitt that notes the king appeared at the levee "to stop further lies and any fall of the Stocks."

<sup>140</sup> *The Times*, October 29, 1788, Issue 1157.

<sup>141</sup> *E. Johnson's British Gazette and Sunday Monitor*, October 26, 1788, Issue CCCCLXIX; *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, October 30-November 1, 1788, Issue 4286; *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, November 1, 1788, Issue 2088; *The Gentleman's Magazine* 64 (1788): 2:928.

observe[d] that it occasions a good deal of uneasiness among those, who are best informed.”<sup>142</sup> As most people did not have the access to inquire about the monarch’s status from his physician or the prime minister, and were reliant on newspapers and word of mouth, those interested in the topic were largely confused as to what was actually happening. This can be seen in the following passage from *The Whitehall Evening Post* of October 30-November 1:

The principal topic which attracts the attention of Britons is the present state of their Sovereign’s health; all waiting with anxiety and serious concern to be truly informed on a subject which they think so interesting to themselves; but this satisfaction they cannot obtain. They are left to the vague, contradictory, and absurd paragraphs in newspapers, the writers of which know as little or less than those they write to. A newspaper tells you that his Majesty had a relapse last Tuesday; the same paper gravely tells you that it is not the same malady which his Majesty complained of before! Then how can it be a relapse? This sets them a guessing again; and they all of them, in their turns, throw out their several conjectures, guessing at almost every disorder but the true one, which we apprehend to be somewhat different from them all, without hazarding a conjecture. This shews that they have not consulted his Majesty’s Physicians on the subject, and consequently they write in the dark....<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> “Letters From Lord Hawkesbury,” Lord Hawkesbury to the Duke of Dorset, October 28, 1788, Kent History Centre, U.269 C. 182 90/1/6.

<sup>143</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, October 30-November 1, 1788, Issue 6462. The author of this passage suggests that he spoke to one of George III’s physicians. Medical men were frequently talking to people and helped spread their thoughts on the king’s situation during the Regency Crisis. Such discussions took place one-on-one, but also in the atmosphere of the coffeehouses and clubs. A similar situation existed for leading politicians, including William Pitt and Edmund Burke. For examples of these types of “conversations,” which certainly could explain where the newspapers found their source material, see: Robert Fulke Greville, *The Diaries of Colonel the Hon. Robert Fulke Greville, Equerry to His Majesty King George III*, ed. F. McKno Bladon (London: John Lane, 1930), 123; Gilbert Elliot, *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto from 1751 to 1806*, ed. The Countess of Minto (London: Longman’s, Green, and Co., 1874), 1:253; Arthur Aspinall, ed., *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales 1770-1812* (London: Cassell, 1963), 1:412; Harcourt, 4:100-1, 122; E.E. Reynolds, ed., *The Mawhood Diary: Selections from the Diary Note-books of William Mawhood, Woolen-draper of London, for the Years 1764-1790* (London: Catholic Record Society, 1956), 265. The *General Evening Post*, January 3-6, 1789, Issue 8604 includes a passage providing an account of a friend of Dr. Willis, living in Bristol, who received a letter from the physician about the king’s progress.

With all the apparent confusion surrounding the king, there is little surprise “that it was soon announced that the queen would hold a drawing room [on November 6, 1788] to receive and answer, the enquiries after his Majesty’s health *in form*.”<sup>144</sup>

The situation surrounding the lack of updates on the king’s health reached a new low on November 9, when reports spread throughout London, and soon the rest of the country, that George III had died. On that day, William Mawhood, a Catholic woolen draper living in the capital, heard that “the King cant [*sic*] long survive his Illness.”<sup>145</sup> Lady Elizabeth Foster, a supporter of the opposition and also resident of London, recorded in her diary: “Our morning letters reported the King dead-the evening ones brought a circumstantial account of the King’s illness [which] is a decided madness suppos’d to be occasioned by the humour or Kings evil having fallen on his brain or by water on the brain.”<sup>146</sup> In the newspapers, the account of the event is slightly different, while also noting the panic that resulted. In the case of the *St. James’s Chronicle* November 8-11, 1788, the events of November 9 were described as follows:

...Yet on Sunday Night the Town was again alarmed with an Account that the King’s Complaint was returned with redoubled Violence, and that the Symptoms were of the most dangerous Kind. These continued to increase till about One o’Clock in the Morning, when his Majesty suddenly made a violent Struggle, turned upon his Back, and lay in that Situation so long, with scarce any Pulse, that the medical Attendants thought he had expired.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> *General Evening Post*, November 1-4, 1788, Issue 8576.

<sup>145</sup> Reynolds, 264. William Mawhood recorded on November 7 that “...tis reported the King was dead,” while on November 10 the entry stressed “...the King still alive but like to Die.”

<sup>146</sup> Foster, “Transcript of a Journal of Events of My Own Time,” British Library, Add MS 41579, f. 3r.

<sup>147</sup> *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, November 8-11, 1788, Issue 4290.

Two days later a similar report reached Norwich, resulting in the country parson James Woodforde recording in his diary it “was Reported this Day ... that our good King was dead, Pray God it might not be true.”<sup>148</sup> Even while these rumors of the king’s death circulated, newspapers continued to report on the health of other important individuals, including other members of the royal family. Due to their attendance on the king, both Queen Charlotte and Princess Elizabeth were “compelled by indisposition to retire to ... bed.”<sup>149</sup> Despite their exhaustion from tending to George III, members of the royal family read the newspapers, even though they were privy to more direct information pertaining to the king’s health.<sup>150</sup> In reality, the queen’s and princesses’ interest in what the press reported was about trying to keep the extent of George III’s health problems secret, not to learn what was going on. The best example of this concern comes from the diary of Fanny Burney, who, on November 5, observed that the queen “...had been greatly offended by some anecdote in a newspaper – the ‘Morning Herald’ – relative to the King’s indisposition. She declared the printer should be called to account. She bid me

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<sup>148</sup> James Woodforde, *The Diary of a Country Parson*, ed. John Beresford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 3:63-4. According to the DNB entry about Woodforde written by R.L. Winstanley, Woodforde “was a very ordinary man.” This shows just how far across the spectrum the issue of the king’s health may have reached. “Woodforde, James (1740–1803),” R. L. Winstanley in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38150> (accessed June 29, 2014).

<sup>149</sup> *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, November 10, 1788, Issue 18695. Throughout the king’s illness, in-depth reports on the health of other individuals continued to appear in the newspapers. See: *General Evening Post*, October 25-28, 1788, Issue 8573; *General Evening Post*, October 28-30, 1788, Issue 8574; *E. Johnson’s British Gazette and Sunday Monitor*, November 9, 1788, Issue CCCCLXXI; *The Star*, January 7, 1789, Issue 214.

<sup>150</sup> Although the queen and Prince of Wales talked with the physicians, Charlotte often felt excluded from what happened. This feeling continued throughout most of the illness. For examples see Greville, 134 and Burney, 4:290-2.



burn the paper, and ruminated upon who could be employed to represent to the editor that he must answer at his peril any further such treasonable paragraphs.”<sup>151</sup>

### **Conflicting Reports and the Royal Family’s Response**

By the second week of November, after Charlotte held a drawing room on November 6 to answer questions from the nobility about the monarch’s health, and as the health of the king deteriorated, raising more speculation as to the cause of his illness, the queen realized she could not prevent discussions of George III’s bodily constitution from appearing in print. The outcry for information was too high. The extent of the demand for information, even from outside the capital, can be seen in a letter from Plymouth dated November 14.

The anxiety yesterday of all ranks for the safety of their beloved Sovereign was so great, and the reports so vague and uncertain, and yet so dreadful, that every face had the appearance of the most perfect sorrow; and this morning, when the mail-coach arrived, it was literally stormed by the crowds of people pressing forward to hear the state of his Majesty’s health. When the Gazette appeared, and pronounced him living, their joy was quite tumultuous, every one expressing his satisfaction at his apparent recovery. At noon, Messrs. Haydons, Printers, &c. to his Royal Highness Prince William Henry, printed extracts of the Gazette and London papers with the account of his majesty’s health, and circulated several thousand (*gratis*) through the town of Plymouth and Dock, and the neighbourhood, which afforded great satisfaction to the inhabitants of those places, from

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<sup>151</sup> Burney, 280. Issues of the *Morning Herald* for November 4-6, and November 9 are all missing from the Burney Collection so I cannot confirm what exactly the newspaper said that the queen found so offensive. Macalpine and Hunter, 24 suggest the issue of the *Morning Herald* referred to the king as delirious. Libelous, seditious, and treasonable prosecutions continued throughout the Regency Crisis, although on what scale I have not yet determined. William Combe, *A Letter from a Country Gentleman, to a Member of Parliament, on the Present State of Public Affairs*, 4th ed. (London: Logographic Press, 1789), 48-9 talks about how the publisher of the *Morning Herald* was prosecuted by the Attorney General for libeling the queen during the Regency Crisis. Philip Withers was also brought up on libel charges, twice in February 1789, for commenting on the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Mrs. Fitzherbert. For more on Withers, see Mulvihill, 49-59.

the highest to the lowest, there being many who could not purchase a newspaper, the demand being so very great.<sup>152</sup>

Included in this type of demand were a number of complaints, such as those in the *General Evening Post*, which bemoaned the lack of quality information while stating, “nothing is talked of, nothing is inquired after, but his Majesty’s health....”<sup>153</sup> Other papers bashed their competitors for not recognizing how much “extreme care ... is taken to conceal the true state of his Majesty’s indisposition” and instead were merely reporting “the vague and floating *rumour* of the moment.”<sup>154</sup>

The event that finally brought about a significant change in the reportage of the monarch’s health was the false reports of George III’s death on November 9. The next day newspapers, rather than attacking each other, turned their ire toward the court and ministry for allowing rumors to spread in the first place. As stated most concisely in the oppositional *Morning Herald*:

In the present alarming state of his MAJESTY’S health, the public anxiety has justly been awakened; and that no mode has been adopted to satisfy the enquiries of the loyal and affectionate on so interesting a concern, appears to be an omission towards the people, for which Ministers merit very severe reproach. When the HEIR APPARENT’S illness about eighteen months since created general apprehension, two Gentlemen of his Highness’s suite attended at CARLTON HOUSE to give the desired information; and the true state of his Highness’s health was reported every day from the *minutes* of his physicians. A like decorum and propriety ought to be observed at St. James’s, and some officers of the Court delegated to attend, to give the necessary communications. We do not mean to assert, that the exact stage of the complaint is to be described, or

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<sup>152</sup> *London Chronicle*, November 13-15, 1788, Issue 5001.

<sup>153</sup> *General Evening Post*, November 6-8, 1788, Issue 8578. These same complaints were echoed later in the month. See Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Greville, 2:1-2.

<sup>154</sup> *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, November 8, 1788, Issue 18694.

all its *effects*: But whether his Majesty was *better* or *worse*, is an information that, while it satisfied the enquirer, would have suppressed improper rumours, and removed perplexing doubts.<sup>155</sup>

On November 11, from within the royal family, it was decided that “A Lord of the Bedchamber in Waiting is appointed to attend at St. James’s, every day from ten till four, to answer inquiries respecting his Majesty’s health,” which is not surprising considering that “expresses relative to the least change in his disorder are hourly arriving in London from Windsor.”<sup>156</sup> What is surprising, is that the queen conceded her desire to keep the king’s illness private and allowed this new form of press briefing, although, as we will see, the decision to make a Lord of the Bedchamber accessible did little to provide clarity

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<sup>155</sup> *Morning Herald*, November 10, 1788, Issue 2513. Despite proposing limitations on what was announced at St. James’s, later issues of the *Morning Herald* included more complete and nuanced descriptions of the effects the king’s ailment produced, much to the chagrin of George III’s supporters. There is some truth to the account presented in this report that in 1787 information about the Prince of Wales’ health was handed out at Carlton House. The *London Chronicle* May 26-9, 1787, Issue 4761 reported that the prince had been ill with a fever, treated by Dr. Jebb and other physicians which allowed “a favourable perspiration ... [to take] place.” The report continued that “we were told at Carlton House, that his Royal Highness was much better, had lost blood a second time, was pronounced to be out of danger, and the fever much abated.” However, most newspapers that covered the prince’s illness made no mention of the source for their accounts or that they specifically learned about it from Carlton House. These other newspapers included the *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, May 26-9, 1787, Issue 4095; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, May 29, 1787, Issue 18242; *Whitehall Evening Post*, May 26-29, 1787, Issue 6249. The queen’s decision to provide a similar outlet for information certainly appears to be a realization by the court that greater efforts were required to quiet the public’s fears about the monarch’s health. The method used earlier in the century of holding drawing rooms and assuring those in attendance that the sovereign was healthy was no longer sufficient.

<sup>156</sup> *General Evening Post*, November 8-11, 1788, Issue 8579. Since the king was at Windsor, there was no immediacy to these reports and they may have been outdated by the time they arrived at St. James’s. Burney 4:348 includes a passage noting how few people came to Windsor for information after November 12 since “everybody goes thither [to St. James’s] to read the bulletin.” Foreigners were equally appalled at the bulletins, as see in Ida Macalpine, Richard Hunter, and C. Rimington, “Porphyria in the Royal Houses of Stuart, Hanover, and Prussia: A Follow-up Study of George III’s Illness,” *British Medical Journal* 6 (January 1968): 16. George III’s Hanoverian physician, Dr. von Zimmerman, responded to an enquiry from the Hanoverian Privy Council in November 1788 in these terms: “Nothing can be gathered from the news which reaches us from London. It is impossible—and would not be justified—to rely on the English newspapers which are so often full of lies.... No doctor on earth could divine the nature of the illness without knowing the facts—still less suggest treatment. From the first dispatches it sounded like an apoplexy, but today they mention an acute delirium.... But not a single symptom is described which enables one to decide whether it is an inflammatory, a bilious or a putrid fever ... or whether perhaps some gouty matter, or even water has settled on the brain and produced these threatening symptoms.”

as to the actual nature of the king's illness and was likely a new approach on behalf of Charlotte and the ministry to limit speculation and curb demands for information deemed too damning for public consumption.<sup>157</sup> This was the first time since at least 1688 that a royal conceded to a public demand for additional information regarding the health of a monarch. As we have seen, in the reigns of the later Stuarts and the first two Hanoverians, efforts were made to conceal the details of an illness from publication, not provide more fodder for the expanded press.<sup>158</sup>

Beginning November 12, the Lords of the Bedchamber, while answering questions from the nobility and gentry, usually read the latest account of the king's health sent from Windsor.<sup>159</sup> These bulletins provided few details and were purposely vague, although by the end of the month they were signed by the attending physicians and were the lead story in the London section of most newspapers. For instance, on November 14,

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<sup>157</sup> Liverpool Papers, Vol. XXXIV, William Fawkener to Lord Hawkesbury, November 12, 1788, British Library, Add MS 38223, f. 257. William Fawkener, a clerk of the Privy Council, wrote: "They should at least have done earlier, what they have at last thought proper to do, and a Lord of the Bedchamber should have been in waiting to have given proper account of the progress of the King's disorder: It would have been a right[?] attention to the publick [*sic*], and a becoming respect to the King; and would have had the effect, at least in a degree, of preventing the reports which from day to day have been circulated, and against the confidence of which, without some certain place of intelligence to resort to, it is impossible always to be on guard, on a subject so interesting and important as this."

<sup>158</sup> According to Burney, 4:312, the following day Queen Charlotte ordered the Archbishop of Canterbury to "issue out public prayers for the poor King, for all the churches." This resulted in a weekly reminder for all the subjects of their ill sovereign, for whom they prayed. The prayers were printed: *A Prayer to be Used on Litany Days before the Litany, and on other Days immediately before the Prayer for all Conditions of Men, in All Cathedral, Collegiate, and Parochial Churches and Chapels within England, Wales, and the Town of Berwick upon Tweed, during His Majesty's present Indisposition* (London: Charles Eyre and Andrew Strahan, 1788), 3-4, including the passage, "May it please Thee to remove from him the Visitation, with which for the Punishment of our Transgressions Thou hast seen it good to afflict him." The prayers said in Ireland, Scotland, and at Catholic churches are available in *The Gentleman's Magazine* 64 (1788): 2:1118-9.

<sup>159</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* 64 (1788): 2:1025 and 2:1118 compiled all the daily bulletins, unsigned by the doctors, and presented them in a block at the end of each issue of the periodical.

the account publically opened and read in front of all in attendance at St. James's reported that the king "had many hours of quiet and apparently undisturbed sleep, but had not received that benefit from it which was expected."<sup>160</sup> Even these anodyne bulletins had to first be approved by the queen and were frequently criticized for how little insight they actually provided about the king's current constitutional state.<sup>161</sup> In a letter from the antiquarian Anthony Storer to the diplomat William Eden at the end of November, the former bemoaned that, "the physicians vary their phrases every day in the newspapers, meaning to say as little as they can, and to keep his Majesty's disastrous and unfortunate situation with all the delicacy that they can possibly show. The bulletin daily talks of a fever, but fever he has not. The word fever is probably substituted for insanity."<sup>162</sup> While in some ways the care taken by some of George III's physicians to conceal the true state of the king's health mirrors the efforts taken by John Arbuthnot when Queen Anne was

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<sup>160</sup> *General Evening Post*, November 13-15, 1788, Issue 8581.

<sup>161</sup> For an example of the queen's oversight of the bulletins, see "Diary of John Willis During George III's Illness 1788-1789," Willis Papers, Volume II, British Library, Add MS 41691, f. 41r.

<sup>162</sup> Eden, 2:245. Newspapers also complained about how lacking the bulletins were. See *Morning Chronicle*, December 1, 1788, Issue 6104. The *Gloucester Journal*, December 1, 1788, Issue 3477 talked specifically of the king's "mental alienations." Greville, 152 writes about the code used to put together the bulletins in his diary. On January 4, 1789 he recorded: "The King passed an Indifferent Night, & four hours Sleep – At times He talked much & often incoherently. In the Morning when He awoke He was much in the same state of Mind as yesterday—He was quick and ticklish to manage, but He was not violent-- The Bulletin of this day was dispatched without objection which it well might, as it was even more favourable than perhaps it ought to have been. It mentioned that the King had had a quiet Evening, that He had had 4 hours sleep & that He was calm this Morning—M<sup>r</sup> Best, Secretary to the Hanoverian Minister, came to the Library this morning before the Bulletin was made up, and enquired of Me the State of H:M<sup>ys</sup> health. I gave Him what particulars I knew—Soon after Doctor John Willis joined us in the Library, & M<sup>r</sup> Best asked Him, What sort of Bulletin we should have. He answered, 'I doubt but an Indifferent one; It does not deserve a good one.' After this conversation, & when the Bulletin appeared, I whispered [to] M<sup>r</sup> Best, 'you know now how to read our Bulletins.'"

ill earlier in the century, George III's doctors had more with which to contend, in particular an enlarged press and parliamentary inquiry regarding this "insanity."<sup>163</sup>

One newspaper that did not include any reference to insanity was the official *London Gazette*, nor did it even mention the illness for two weeks while other publications were "induced ... to be very minute in our detail" of the king's health.<sup>164</sup> Another of the developments that occurred in the aftermath of the king's rumored death on November 9 involved this publication. For the first time during the crisis, the official paper of November 8-11, 1788 contained mention of the king's ailment. The report was simple, but indicative of just how disconcerting the health of George III had become. The story, which was the lead one in the paper, explained "there will not be a Levee at St. James's Tomorrow, on Account of His Majesty's Indisposition. The last Accounts from Windsor, dated at Ten o'Clock this Morning, were that His Majesty had passed the night quietly, but that there was no Abatement in his Complaint."<sup>165</sup> The sudden emergence of the official newspaper into the discussion of the sovereign's ailment, which only occurred with the approval of the ministry, did not pass unnoticed. The *Whitehall Evening Post* of November 13-15, 1788 published a postscript that undoubtedly resonated with a wide segment of the population, as individuals from the nobility in London, country parsons, diplomats in Madrid and Rome, and even the wife of a yeoman farmer living near

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<sup>163</sup> See chapter five for a discussion of Dr. John Arbuthnot's efforts to conceal Queen Anne's state of health.

<sup>164</sup> *London Chronicle*, November 8-11, 1788, Issue 4999.

<sup>165</sup> *London Gazette*, November 8-11, 1788, Issue 13041.

Fakenham, Norfolk were interested in George III's "fever which terminated in Lunacy."<sup>166</sup>

LAST Thursday the London Gazette spoke out for the first time, though somewhat abruptly, that his majesty has an indisposition; and though he had passed the night quietly, yet there was no abatement in his complaint; without the least intimation of the nature and tendency of that complaint. Any stranger reading these paragraphs would imagine that repeated accounts of the progress of the disorder had appeared in that vehicle of intelligence before. However, such as it is, it gave some authentic information to an anxious public, sufficient to annihilate the false wicked and unfounded reports that were daily and hourly circulating, and as frequently contradicted by the busy tongue of clamour; for which condescension we are thankful; and are not a little pleased with the resolution taken by the Court to give daily information to all enquiring friends indiscriminately, of the state of the Sovereign, whatever it may be for the time being. This is what we have seriously recommended and strenuously contended for all along, since we apprehended severity and danger in the case, for various obvious reasons well known and authenticated.<sup>167</sup>

Despite the scathing critique, the *Whitehall Evening Post* recognized that, as hard as they were being on the *London Gazette*, the official newspaper was "not permitted to give so much [information] at large!"<sup>168</sup>

Even though the *London Gazette* remained the most anodyne of all the periodicals in terms of actual reporting, there were enough other publications disseminating every rumor and story they could find during November and December, that the public obtained

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<sup>166</sup> Mary Hardy, *Mary Hardy's Diary* (Norfolk: Norfolk Record Society, 1968), 69. See also Auckland Papers, Volume XVII, British Library, Add MS 34428, f. 21r, 47r, and *London Chronicle* December 9-11, 1788, Issue 5012. Other examples of the wide-spread interest in the king's health are visible in the poetry that appeared in the newspapers. For more on this see: David Chandler, "'In Sickness, Despair, and in Agony': Imaging the King's Illness, 1788-1789," in *Liberating Medicine, 1720-1835*, ed. Tristanne J. Connolly and S.H. Clark (London: Brookfield, 2009), 109-125.

<sup>167</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, November 13-15, 1788, Issue 6468.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

a shockingly large portion of the truth surrounding the health of the king, although this is only clear now from a historical perspective. Such reports included that the king was “unusually loquacious,” his “head is much swelled,” and that a physician at Bath had “foretold the dreadful effect which has taken place in consequence of his Majesty’s drinking the Cheltenham Waters.”<sup>169</sup> The difficulty for the people at the time, however, was determining fact from fiction, especially when the official reports could be the most inaccurate. For instance, the public bulletins distributed by the doctors, read at St. James’s, and reported in all the newspapers for December 23-24, 1788 noted that the king “had a bad night but is composed this morning [December 23]” and on December 24 that the previous night George III had “but ... little sleep, and is quiet this morning.”<sup>170</sup> According to the December 24 diary entry of Dr. John Willis, one of the physicians attending George III, over the last two days, “the Strait waistcoat was taken off from his Majesty at noon yesterday, but was put on again soon after 2, and was not taken off till 9 this morning. His Majesty has not had more than an hour’s sleep in the night, is good humoured, but as incoherent as ever.”<sup>171</sup> There is little doubt that the sense of propriety of most of George III’s physicians, excluding Dr. Richard Warren, who were not comfortable enough to even physically examine the king’s body, coupled with the queen’s oversight of the bulletins, limited what was officially released out of respect for the king’s dignity and privacy.

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<sup>169</sup> *London Chronicle*, November 29-December 2, 1788, Issue 5008; *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal*, November 15, 1788, Issue 2090; *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal*, December 6, 1788, Issue 2093.

<sup>170</sup> *General Evening Post*, December 23-25, 1788, Issue 8599.

<sup>171</sup> “Diary of John Willis During George III’s Illness 1788-1789,” Willis Papers, Volume II, British Library, Add MS 41691, f. 35r.



### Ministry and Opposition Attacks

By the time Dr. John Willis wrote his account at the end of December 1788, the Regency Crisis had already begun filling the newspapers with debates about the nature of the British constitution while the powers of Parliament took center stage. On November 13, William Pitt realized the need to introduce a bill which would declare the Prince of Wales regent. However, fearing that under such a regency the current ministry would be dismissed, Pitt looked for ways to limit the duration and powers granted to the heir. Recognizing the political turmoil that was just beginning, both the ministry and opposition launched written attacks against each other in the hopes of swaying public favor on their side. These attacks centered on the health of George III. In a society where the inhabitants were said to “believe the newspapers more than they believe the Gospel,” both sides knew how important it was to capitalize on the interest in the monarch’s health and stress, as the ministry did, that the king would recover, while the opposition articulated that the sovereign’s incapacity would be permanent.<sup>172</sup> Ministry papers pointed out that “the Opposition prints daily teem with abuse,” and that “during the whole course of his Majesty’s unfortunate illness, [they] have always doled out the worst and most untrue reports ... and ... had the impudence to subjoin to the St. James’s intelligence.”<sup>173</sup> The oppositional papers responded back in kind: “We do not think it worth while to reply to the attacks which are made upon this paper, by the ministerial prints, on account of our discharging our duty to the public, in detecting the gross

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<sup>172</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, November 11, 1788, Issue 6087.

<sup>173</sup> *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, November 14, 1788, Issue 4887 and *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, November 29, 1788, Issue 6103.

falsehoods which they promulgate respecting the state of the KING'S health.”<sup>174</sup>

Meanwhile, the oppositional *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* stated on December 3:

The daily report of his Majesty's health has not yet been discontinued at St. James's. That of yesterday is the only one, for many days, that has given the smallest indication of amendment; we wish we could, in truth and sincerity, agree with those, who will eagerly lay hold on it as a confirmation of all the fictions of recovery with which they have been endeavouring to mislead the public; but the nature of his Majesty's disorder is too generally known to be such, that an intermission of one, or of several days, affords at best but a glimmering of hopes, which a single hour may obscure again, and which only length of time can brighten into certainty.<sup>175</sup>

Most of the reading public knew the political affiliation of the periodicals, as seen when the Pitt-supporting MP James Bland Burges wrote to his wife on November 29, 1788, telling her to read the *World*, but to avoid the *Morning Herald*, as it was “an infamously abusive Paper.”<sup>176</sup> His suggestion remained valid for less than a month as the opposition, desperate to influence public opinion, secretly bought the *World* at the end of December.<sup>177</sup> This was soon followed by their purchasing of the *Morning Post*, which became notorious as a source of false information penned by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who was working on behalf of the opposition.

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<sup>174</sup> *Morning Herald*, December 1, 1788, Issue 2531.

<sup>175</sup> *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, December 3, 1788, Issue 18715.

<sup>176</sup> Bland Burges Papers, James Bland Burges to Anne Bland Burges, November 29, 1788, Dept. 8 Bland Burges, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, f. 89r.

<sup>177</sup> Bland Burges Papers, James Bland Burges to Anne Bland Burges, January 10, 1789, Dept. 8 Bland Burges, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, f. 149r; Lady Elizabeth Foster, “Transcript of a Journal of Events of My Own Time Kept by Lady Elizabeth Foster (5 Nov. 1788-10 Jan. 1789),” British Library, Add MS 41579, f. 17r.



evening. Additional blisters were applied, and James's Powder was administered. In the night they took effect, and produced very favourable symptoms."<sup>179</sup> The conclusions drawn by the populace after hearing about the transformations in the king's behavior were not helped when rumors circulated in mid-November that Dr. John Monro, the most famous mad doctor in the country, was assisting in the treatment of George III.

Ministry newspapers, like the *General Evening Post* of November 15-18, 1788, tried to counter these rumors about Dr. Monro's consultation by noting that only three physicians were attending the king and that "we assert this on the very best authority; and we do it readily, as the name of another medical gentleman has been mentioned, through which the public may be led to form a very erroneous notion of the nature of his Majesty's complaint."<sup>180</sup> The oppositional press ascribed "the effects of the King's disorder to insanity,"<sup>181</sup> while neutral newspapers hinted at the underlying cause of George III's ailment through passing remarks, such as "the only instance, on the records of history, of a Monarch's being insane and a regency appointed in consequence thereof, occurred in the time of Henry V, when Charles, King of France proved to be in that dreadful situation."<sup>182</sup> Although the reading public consumed all the available information, they were aware of how quickly reports could change and the frequent falsehoods of rumors as seen earlier in November 1788, "when Lady Grant died suddenly

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<sup>179</sup> *World*, November 10, 1788, Issue 582.

<sup>180</sup> *General Evening Post*, November 15-18, 1788, Issue 8582. Evidence suggests that Dr. Munro was consulted in relation to the king's illness but never attended him. See "Letters Relating to Illnesses of George III in 1789 and 1811," Royal College of Physicians, London, MS 3011/47.

<sup>181</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, November 25, 1788, Issue 6099.

<sup>182</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, November 14, 1788, Issue 6090.

in Pall-Mall ... [and] the Report, as it went up St. James's Street, said it was Lady Grantham, in Piccadilly it killed Lady Grantley, who by the by was dead long before. In Cavendish Square it became the Countess of Grandison .... Thus does Rumour sort with the Credulity of Mankind, and the Feelings of Families.’’<sup>183</sup> A restless public wanted to end these rumors and find out once and for all, the true state of the king's bodily constitution.

### **A Public or Private Topic?**

As rumors swirled throughout November and no resolution could take place at the moment since Parliament was prorogued until December 4, an interesting theme emerged in some of the newspapers and private correspondence circulating through the capital. Unlike periods of illness discussed in previous chapters, when there was a desire for additional information regarding the monarch's health which received no favorable response from the royal family, November and early December 1788 saw some publishers and commentators articulate a belief that the people had a right to know the full story behind the king's ailments. Interestingly enough, neither newspaper that advanced these claims was an oppositional publication. The editor of the ministry-supporting *London Chronicle* wrote on November 6:

While the complaint is so calamitous, and the national concern so great, it seems to be a pity that the public are kept so much in the dark in regard to his Majesty's disorder and the effect it has on his mind; since it should seem reasonable for a free and loyal people to expect the fullest information on the progress of the disorder and the prospect of recovery.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, November 4-6, 1788, Issue 4288.

<sup>184</sup> *London Chronicle*, November 29-December 2, 1788, Issue 5008.

The neutral *Morning Chronicle* of November 29-December 2 published a letter to the printer that stated, the “community at large who, from the great interest they have in the preservation of one of the best Kings ... have certainly a right to hear ‘the whole truth and nothing but the truth’ in this melancholy and much lamented case.”<sup>185</sup>

Such claims for full disclosure did not go unchallenged in the print culture of the Regency Crisis. The *Whitehall Evening Post* of November 8-11, 1788 praised the approach taken by the royal family and ministry stating, “it is with great propriety and wisdom, that the progress of the alarming disorder, under which his Majesty has for some days laboured; has been kept almost a profound secret from the public.”<sup>186</sup> Nearly a month later, the editor of that same newspaper stressed:

The affliction of the Royal Family we have ever felt as a subject of distant and respectful sympathy; we have never pretended to penetrate into the recesses of the palace, and to detail the particulars of what was passing there for the amusement of impertinent and unfeeling curiosity.<sup>187</sup>

The strongest rebuttal, however, appeared in the *Public Advertiser* of December 4, 1788, the same day that Parliament began a new session to tackle the issue of George III’s health.

However much we interest ourselves in what related to his majesty’s present situation, we cannot help wishing, says a correspondent, that fewer comments were made upon the subject. If unavoidable infirmities ought always to be but rarely, and even then tenderly mentioned, it becomes certainly a double duty in this case, where personal respect combines so strongly with every other motive, to treat it with a peculiar delicacy and

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<sup>185</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, November 29, 1788, Issue 6103.

<sup>186</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, November 8-11, 1788, Issue 6466.

<sup>187</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, November 29-December 2, 1788, Issue 6475.

reserve. Those who make so free with this matter, especially in the daily prints, ought to consider, that the public at large, who sincerely love their Sovereign, cannot be agreeably entertained with many of the representations given of his complaints; and they are much deceived if they think, that their seeming so very officious will be held as a proof of their own loyalty and affection. On the contrary, it will have a quite different effect; as it is generally allowed, we believe, that the deepest affection is naturally the most silent.<sup>188</sup>

This sort of silent devotion and respect for the privacy of the royal family was certainly in keeping with the beliefs of William Fawkener, a clerk of the Privy Council. In a private letter to Lord Hawkesbury on November 12, Fawkener wrote:

These [newspaper?] accounts are certainly most extraordinary; and the general language, founded as is pretended on the positive opinion of some of the physicians, is, that the King can never recover his understanding: If they have already pronounced such an opinion ... it appears to me that nothing can be more inexcusable than their conduct. Supposing the derangement of the mind could not have been kept a secret, as I will take for granted it could not, it surely might for some considerable time at least, and without any great violence to their consciences, or apprehension of injury to their medical reputation, have been represented as merely symptomatick [*sic*], and incidental to the fever; and when at last it had become necessary that the true state of things should be disclosed without palliation it might, I should imagine, have been done with more decency and management: I merley[?] think the family of the most private gentleman in the kingdom, might, in similar circumstances, have expected this forbearance, from the consideration and humanity of his physician. As it has now been managed, in case of the Kings death, it will leave an impression in the highest degree painful to the Queen, & Royal Family, particularly injurious to the Princesses, and justly alarming to the nation, for years to come: if he should live and recover his senses, it may throw a cloud over the remainder of his life and reign, and give rise[?], & ground to the most malicious comments of his enemies on any little accidental peculiarity ... manner or expression, which otherwise would have passed without observation.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> *Public Advertiser*, December 4, 1788, Issue 16967.

<sup>189</sup> Liverpool Papers, Vol. XXXIV, William Fawkener to Lord Hawkesbury, November 12, 1788, British Library, Add MS 38223, f. 256-7.

Fanny Burney expressed a similar complaint regarding the information provided by the physicians, but was especially upset that they were going to be subject to a parliamentary examination. She wrote in her diary: “Good Heaven! what an insult does this seem from parliamentary power, to investigate and bring forth to the world every circumstance of such a malady as is ever held sacred to secrecy in the most private families! How indignant we all feel here no words can say.”<sup>190</sup> While it makes sense that the handmaiden to the queen would be upset about an invasion of the royal family’s privacy, even members of the Privy Council struggled to determine whether or not the care of the king was a subject of private or public concern. Francis Osborne, 5th Duke of Leeds and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1788, recounted in his diary on December 1:

I said, that however serviceable domestic care might be I thought the case of the King must be considered as a public concern, and again recurred to the necessity, if not in substance at least in appearance, of assembling the Privy Council. L<sup>d</sup> Chatham recommended the whole being conducted as privately as possible. The Duke of Richmond expressed himself as strongly of my opinion, and we afterwards agreed, that the Privy Council *Generally* should be summoned on Wednesday, and the K.<sup>s</sup> Physicians ordered to attend.<sup>191</sup>

When Parliament met on December 4 there was little discussion about whether or not to investigate the king’s physicians, but instead the focus was on how to do it in a tactful way. The Regency Crisis, sparked by the health of George III, provided for a confluence of popular outcry and parliamentary power that broke down the final vestiges of mystical monarchy.

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<sup>190</sup> Burney, 4:378. 4:335 of the diary also records Burney’s account that Mrs. Schwellenberg, Queen Charlotte’s Lady in Waiting, “thinks it is treasonable to say the King is ever at all indisposed.”

<sup>191</sup> Oscar Browning, ed., *The Political Memoranda of Francis Fifth Duke of Leeds, Now First Printed From the Originals in the British Museum* (Westminster: Nichols and Sons, 1884), 127.



### Parliament, Physicians, and Demystification

By December 4, it was clear to nearly everyone following the reports involving the king's health that better information was required from the physicians treating the monarch. On the eve of the new session of Parliament, *The Times* summed up the situation in straightforward terms: "The daily prints respecting the king's illness are truly ridiculous."<sup>192</sup> As much as they were politicians, with status, power, and office to be gained or lost based on the true state of George III's health, the MPs were in the same boat as the rest of the populace and also products of their age. They were fully aware of the expansion of print culture and the advent of celebrity that had reached its highest point yet during George III's first twenty-five years on the throne. They had read the newspapers and learned about the health and sickness of leading members of society, the same as anyone else reading the newspapers in the coffeehouses or hearing them read on the docks. Therefore, they shared in the public's interest surrounding the king's health on a social, not just a political level. The only difference was they could do something to alleviate the confusion and mystery surrounding the sovereign's ailments.

This interest was first apparent in the Privy Council meeting, referenced by the 5th Duke of Leeds in his diary, when investigations of the physicians occurred on December 3, 1788. The general belief of the attending doctors was that the "King was at present totally incapable of attending to business-,that there ... appeared a probability of recovery, but the time which would be necessary to effect his cure was not possibly to be

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<sup>192</sup> *The Times*, December 3, 1788, Issue 1196.

ascertained.”<sup>193</sup> The conduct of the physicians at the examination, in particular Dr.

Warren who, “acted a scandalous part,” struck Lord Hawkesbury as overly influenced by politics, hinting at the party tensions that only increased during the next two months.<sup>194</sup>

Even though the physicians had answered some questions before the Privy Council, members of Parliament wanted to personally question the medical tribe to find out more details involving the long term prospects of recovery, which resulted in the appointment on December 4, 1788 of members in each house to small committees responsible for conducting the examinations.<sup>195</sup> The belief of those in Parliament is best summed up in a comment made by the Marquis of Stafford in the Lords on December 8. He felt that the examinations should occur in front of a small committee so that some privacy could be preserved since, it “was a subject of such delicacy, that too much precaution could not be taken, nor too much decorum observed in their proceedings, lest they should wound not only the feelings of the Royal Family, but, he would add, the feelings of a whole kingdom.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Browning, 129.

<sup>194</sup> “Letters From Lord Hawkesbury,” Lord Hawkesbury to the Duke of Dorset, December 5, 1788, Kent History Centre, U.269 C.182/90/1/6.

<sup>195</sup> Committees were also appointed in both Houses to find historic precedents that involved a regency necessitated by an infirmed monarch. The closest they found was the situation involving Henry VI’s extended period of madness in 1453-1455, but this was determined to not be a useful comparison. For more on Henry VI’s madness, see Bertram Wolffe, *Henry VI*, new ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 267-288. For newspapers discussing historic precedents, see *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, December 11, 1788, Issue 6113; *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, November 29-December 2, 1788, Issue 4299. For the discussion that occurred in Parliament involving the use of such an old precedent, see William Cobbett, ed., *The Parliamentary History of England: From the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, vol. 27 (London: R. Bagshaw, 1814), c.752-768.

<sup>196</sup> Cobbett, vol. 27, c.658.

Even though members of the Lords and Commons recognized that the king's health was a matter requiring delicacy, there were no protests to printing the reports generated by the parliamentary committees. The only objection came from those concerned that printing the reports might slow down the process of settling the regency question. Overall, most MPs supported the view extolled by Mr. Rolle, which was reported in the *General Evening Post* of December 9-11, 1788. He "hoped that the report of an examination so full of such indisputable authority, and so happily calculated to dispel the national gloom, would not be confined to the Members of that House, but communicated to the public at large. If it were not, imperfect and mutilated accounts of it would be circulated, and disseminate doubt and uncertainty...."<sup>197</sup> Unfortunately, even with the publication of the reports in the newspapers and as stand-alone pamphlets, the public was not satisfied, as commentaries in the press and private correspondence expressed concern and dissatisfaction with the line of questioning taken by the MPs.<sup>198</sup>

The physicians and the health of George III remained at the center of public interest until his recovery at the start of March 1789. Much conversation during these months turned toward "the Regency ... [which makes] Ladies as Well as Gentlemen talk of nothing else than the Nature of the British constitution, and *every Family has formed itself into a Committee of the whole House on the State of the Nation.*"<sup>199</sup> Since the opinion of the physicians was so important in settling the future of the country, they were

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<sup>197</sup> *General Evening Post*, December 9-11, 1788, Issue 8593.

<sup>198</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, December 4-6, 1788, Issue 6477; *Morning Herald*, December 29, 1788, Issue 2538; "Letters of Hon. Frederick Robinson," John, 2nd Lord Boringdon to Hon. Frederick Robinson, January 20, 1789, Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, 1259/1/86.

<sup>199</sup> *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, December 13-16, 1788, Issue 4305.

examined again in January 1789. Just how intense the scrutiny surrounding the king's health had become due to party strife, is evident in the fact that the earlier examination in December 1788 took six hours, whereas the one in January took six days. Despite the vigorous efforts of Edmund Burke to discredit Reverend Francis Willis, the physician most optimistic of the king's recovery, the consensus of the examination was that George III was showing signs of improvement, lessening the chance that the Regency Bill would pass. This convalescence increased in early February, with *The Times* reporting on February 10, 1789 that, "We are happy in assuring the world, that his Majesty has been for the last week past in a state of more general composure and tranquility."<sup>200</sup>

The newspapers in February covered every aspect of the political crisis and the king's health so well, that in a February 3, 1789 letter, Thomas Lewis, a lawyer living in London, wrote to his former co-worker, John Blagdon Hale in Gloucestershire, that "I should be happy to give you intelligence of political matters, but nothing of consequence comes to my knowledge that is not in some or other of the newspapers."<sup>201</sup> The Regency Bill had moved from the Commons to the Lords by February 19, where it was being debated, when it was announced that George III was in a state of convalescence, ending any discussion of a regency. The following day *The Times* proclaimed, "OUR MOST AMIABLE SOVEREIGN IS, AT LENGTH, COMPLETELY RECOVERED FROM HIS ALARMING AND MUCH LAMENTED INDISPOSITION.... THE KING IS, AT THIS HOUR ... COMPLETELY IN POSSESSION OF ALL HIS MENTAL

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<sup>200</sup> *The Times*, February 10, 1789, Issue 1287.

<sup>201</sup> "Hale Family of Aldery Correspondence," Dr. Blagden to John B. Hale, February 3, 1789, Gloucestershire Archives, D1086/F119.

FACULTIES....”<sup>202</sup> People were caught up in the news that George III had recovered, although it was not until the middle of March that he was healthy enough to be seen in public. In a letter of February 27, 1789, a Mr. Wight wrote to John Blagdon Hale that “The perfect Recovery of our gracious Monarch enlivens the Hearts of all his true Subjects – Things will now go on in the usual Channel.”<sup>203</sup> By April 23, when the thanksgiving celebration for the recovery of the king took place at St. Paul’s Cathedral, George III was securely on the throne with the royal prerogative invested in a single person. He even experienced an increase in popularity. But, unlike Wight’s claim in his letter to Hale that everything would go back to normal, the illness of 1788 to 1789 changed public perceptions of the monarchy. Through the expansion of the press, the replacement of a belief in the monarch’s health being a private matter with the body politic’s claim that it had a right to know all the facts, and concessions made by the court and queen to this demand for information, the last vestiges of the mystified veil that held together the king’s two bodies was torn asunder by the middle of 1789.

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<sup>202</sup> *The Times*, February 20, 1789, Issue 1297.

<sup>203</sup> “Hale Family of Aldery Correspondence,” Mr. Wight to John B. Hale, February 27, 1789, Gloucestershire Archives, D1086/F119.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ROYAL HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS AND PHYSICIANS:

#### GUARDIANS AND FOUNTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Ungodly papers every week  
Poor simple souls persuade  
That courtiers good for nothing are  
Or but for mischief made.<sup>1</sup>

Who would wish to mount a Throne, when, to ascend it, they must bid farewell to the joys of society, the innocent freedom of conversation, nay, more, when they must bid adieu to the generous warmth of mutual friendship? Princes, if they have discernment, must conclude, or at least suspect, that all with whom they are connected, are attached to them either from the motives of pride or interest. Melancholy situation! Among so many attendants, not to have one friendly companion.<sup>2</sup>

From an illicit topic in 1688, the health and body of the English monarch became the center of public discussion across all classes of people on the eve of the French Revolution in 1789.<sup>3</sup> The latest developments about the health of George III were the lead story in the newspapers and periodicals of the day, while word of mouth rumors circulated through homes, shops, coffeehouses, and the streets. This chapter examines the people located near the sovereign during the long eighteenth century who helped

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Wortley Montagu, *Essays and Poems and Simplicity, a Comedy*, ed. Robert Halsband and Isoble Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle*, November 1-3, 1758, Issue 202.

<sup>3</sup> I refer to the king and queen as "English" and not "British" since I want to make clear I have not yet explored these responses in either Scotland or Ireland.

distribute sensitive medical information to the wider public, in part leading to the demystification of the English monarchy. Additionally, this chapter will explain what changed in the roles and motivations of these people, and how they responded to the new expectations of monarchy, press, and people.

In addition to providing some prosopographical information on these gatekeepers of information, this chapter challenges some of the existing literature detailing the extent of influence that physicians had during the long eighteenth century. As Margaret Pelling has argued, “physicians had privileged access to the bodies and even the minds of their elite patients, but although they could make economic gains, they were largely unable to make public use of this knowledge....”<sup>4</sup> Steve Sturdy has advanced a similar claim, noting that “early modern physicians occupied an ambiguous social position.... their role as attendants of the sick located them in what was still a residual and deprived sphere of domestic privacy, remote from the structures of rank and status that centered on the public world of court and state....”<sup>5</sup> While members of the medical tribe were often a target of scorn and derision, especially during the reign of the Hanoverians, as seen in the numerous satirical works that portrayed them as murderers and quacks, some doctors not only had intimate access to the body of the royals, but were able to use that access for political purposes.<sup>6</sup> These court positions were not just about money or prestige, but also placement near the fount of information.

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<sup>4</sup> Margaret Pelling, “Public and Private Dilemmas: The College of Physicians in Early Modern London,” in *Medicine, Health and the Public Sphere in Britain, 1600-2000*, ed. Steve Sturdy (London: Routledge, 2002), 32.

<sup>5</sup> Steve Sturdy, “Introduction: Medicine, Health, and the Public Sphere,” in *Medicine, Health and the Public Sphere in Britain, 1600-2000*, 5.

### Codes of Conduct for Courtiers and Physicians

Finding a way to measure the behavior of these courtiers and physicians is not a straightforward process. During the period in question, there are a few possible standards to consider. The first applies to the grooms, pages, and individuals serving in and near the bedchamber of the monarch. Although there were slight variations in its phrasing over the years, those entering the Lord Chamberlain's establishment swore an oath. It read:

You shall sweare on the Holy Evangelists and by the Contents of this Book [The Bible], and by the fayth you bear unto Almighty God to be a true servant to Our Sovereigne ... by the Grace of God of England Scotland France and Ireland King Defender of the Fayth etc. You shall know nothing that shal be any wayes hurtful or prejudicial to the King Mat's Royale person State Crowne or Dignity but shall hinder it what in you lies....<sup>7</sup>

And yet, the proximity of these oath-takers to their royal sovereign gave them access to information which some could not help but spread. Examples of minor information leaks involving household servants occurred during every reign covered in this dissertation. For instance, when Mary II suffered from smallpox in 1694, Jenkin Lewis, a servant to the Duke of Gloucester, went to the laundress, Mrs. Worthington, at Kensington Palace to find out the latest on the queen's health.<sup>8</sup> Robert Bucholz has shown that "information of variable accuracy [involving Queen Anne's health] was probably always available from

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, see Paul William Child, "Jonathan Swift's Latin Quacks: 'A Consultation of Four Physicians upon a Lord that Was Dying,'" *The Cambridge Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (March 2011): 21-35. Comments on physicians in the newspapers are numerous. Two examples are in *Grub Street Journal*, January 9, 1735, Issue 263 and *Observer*, January 30-February 2, 1706, Issue 88. Satirical prints were also ubiquitous. For one of the most famous, see William Hogarth, "The Consultation of Physicians (Arms of the Undertakers)," 1736.

<sup>7</sup> "Lord Chamberlain's Establishment 1695-99," Appointment Books, 1660-1733, National Archives at Kew, LC 3/56 f. 35. My thanks to Professor Robert Bucholz for this source.

<sup>8</sup> Jenkin Lewis, *Memoirs of Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, From His Birth, July the 24<sup>th</sup>, 1689, To October, 1697: From an Original Tract* (London: Payne, 1789), 39.



her servants, who thus acquired a certain kudos at the coffeehouse or tavern.”<sup>9</sup> With George II ill in 1737 and rumors rampant at court, Lord Egmont learned from a “servant of the Royal Family” that the king had a fistula which required two weeks to heal.<sup>10</sup> Even during the Regency Crisis, John Hannington, a page of the Bedchamber at St. James’s, wrote to Basil, 6th Earl of Denbigh with updates on the king’s health during October and November 1788.<sup>11</sup>

These leaks came from all levels of household servants, not just those closest to the monarch. However, one of the most vital sources of information about the sovereign’s health was the men who tended to the king or queen’s bodily constitution. Just like other courtiers who received their position through a warrant from the Lord Chamberlain, medical personnel were liable to the same oath as mentioned above, although they additionally had to contend with the moral standards of the medical profession. Going back to the earliest days of medicine in the Greek world, which influenced the rest of the West, the Hippocratic Oath was considered the fundamental embodiment of how a physician should conduct himself. Over the centuries, this oath was modified and applied to the latest medical trend which, until the end of the seventeenth century in England, was the work of Galen. One of the earliest texts that tried to provide a sense of medical ethics for Galenism was John Securis’ *A Detection and Querimonie of the Daily Enormities and Abuses Committed in Physic*. This treatise appeared in 1566 and stressed that the

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<sup>9</sup> R.O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 186.

<sup>10</sup> H.M.C., *Egmont Diary II*, 339.

<sup>11</sup> “True Copies of Letters to and From Basil Earl of Denbigh (6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Denbigh) Commencing in the Year 1750,” Warwickshire Record Office, CR 2017/C263 f. 381-385.

physician “muste see and studye,” be “modest [in] talke,” and live “an honest lyfe ... [with] good manners.”<sup>12</sup> Yet, the distance from modernity is evident in a further passage. Securis also noted that the doctor must not “minishe his gravitie, for unlesse the paciente have in reverence & estimation his phisiciō as a god, he shall never folow [*sic*] and obey his counsell.”<sup>13</sup>

Even with god-like physicians, there remained great criticism of the conduct and quality of medical practitioners, which brought about complaints that Parliament needed to enact medical reforms. Noah Biggs was an advocate of such reform and in his 1651 treatise, *Mataeotechnia Medicinae Praxeus. The Vanity of the Craft of Physick*, he laid out his complaints, explaining, “...till the body of Physick be changed and reformed there’s little hope that a better sanation of Diseases or a Melioration of the languid condition of men and women will follow then what has been hitherto....”<sup>14</sup> Efforts to reform the medical profession and provide a standard of care remained far from complete, even into the early parts of the nineteenth century.

The physicians discussed in this chapter inhabited a world where the ethical ground was continually shifting as there was no clear handbook for them to follow. No standard gained wide-spread support until the publication in 1803 of Thomas Percival’s seminal work, *Medical Ethics; Or, A Code of Institutes and Precepts, Adapted to the*

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<sup>12</sup> John Securis, *A Detection and Querimonie of the Daily Enormities and Abuses Committed in Physic*, (1566; repr., Amsterdam: Walter J. Johnson, Inc., 1976), A iiiii, recto. For more information on the early development of medical ethics see Andrew Wear, “Medical Ethics in Early Modern England,” in *Doctors and Ethics: The Earlier Historical Setting of Professional Ethics*, ed. Andrew Wear, Johanna Geyer-Kordesch and Roger French (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 98-130.

<sup>13</sup> Securis, A v, verso.

<sup>14</sup> Noah Biggs, *Mataeotechnia Medicinae Praxeus. The Vanity of the Craft of Physick*, (1651), sig b3v., as cited in Wear, “Medical Ethics,” 115.

*Professional Conduct of Physicians and Surgeons*.<sup>15</sup> In this text he laid out the importance of not undermining the credibility and status of fellow physicians and made clear that it was not a god-like presence which a doctor required. Instead, “secrecy and delicacy ... should be strictly observed. And the familiar and confidential intercourse, to which the faculty are admitted in their professional visits, should be used with discretion, and with the most scrupulous regard to fidelity and honour.”<sup>16</sup> The physicians who attended George III in 1788 to 1789 probably had some inkling of Percival’s claims because John Gregory, an MD at the University of Edinburgh, published a series of famous lectures in 1770 that foreshadowed and influenced Percival’s work. *Observations on the Duties and Offices of a Physician and on the Method of Prosecuting Enquiries in Philosophy* quickly made its way from Scotland to London and was popular with members of both the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal Society. Gregory touched on the same issues as Percival, stating that, “it appears how much the characters of individuals, and the peace and happiness of families, may sometimes depend on the discretion, secrecy, and honour of a physician.”<sup>17</sup> In a statement which we will see did not triumph over party factionalism during the 1780s, Gregory also stressed that “physicians in consultation, whatever may be their private resentments or opinions of one another, should divest themselves of all partialities, and think of nothing but what will

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Percival, *Medical Ethics; Or, A Code of Institutes and Precepts, Adapted to the Professional Conduct of Physicians and Surgeons* (Manchester: S. Russell, 1803).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Gregory, *Observations on the Duties and Offices of a Physician and on the Method of Prosecuting Enquiries* (London: W. Strahan, 1770), 26-7.

most effectually contribute to the relief of those under their care.”<sup>18</sup> Most of the physicians who treated Queen Anne, despite preceding Gregory by decades, were able to put the well-being of the sovereign ahead of party strife, even though they had political affiliations. The same was not true for George III’s doctors.

### **Medical Men of William III’s and Anne’s Courts**

Who were these men who struggled to balance their duties as courtiers, physicians, and party adherents? The many doctors who attended the monarchs examined in this dissertation, only a few of whom will be discussed in this chapter, had a diverse set of medical beliefs and educational backgrounds, starting with those men who attended William III. It is understandable that the Stadholder of the Dutch Republic would be most comfortable with physicians from the continent. In the time leading up to and for a little while after the Revolution of 1688, continental universities had achieved a higher level of prestige than English universities in the study of medicine.<sup>19</sup> Rather than focusing on teaching Galen’s theory of the four humors, continental universities stressed the theories of Paracelsus, including his belief that external factors contributed to the health and illness of the human body. However, by the end of the seventeenth century, the empiricism credited to Sir Francis Bacon was making its way into the study of medicine at English universities. Andrew Wear notes that the rational/empirical approach to medicine, with its emphasis on observation in the real world, “helped to structure

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 37. It was not unknown for physicians to settle their differences of medical opinion through physical violence. According to Harold Cook, *The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 215, in 1719 Dr. Richard Mead fought a duel with Dr. John Woodward, as the two tried to determine which type of medical approach was better: academically-trained or empirical physicians.

<sup>19</sup> Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind A Medical History of Humanity* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 288-291.

eighteenth-century medicine, with the rise and fall of different systems of classifying diseases, and attempts to describe diseases by their symptoms rather than by their causes.”<sup>20</sup> By 1714 Galenism, although its influence remained, had begun to lose credibility with people studying medicine in England.

William and Mary appreciated those trained in “commercial and clinical medicine” over the academically trained Galen-focused doctors.<sup>21</sup> At any one time, there were only four physicians in ordinary who attended the king. John Hutton, a Scot with an MD from Padua, had treated Mary when she lived in the Netherlands and had also served as the Physician-General to the Prince of Orange’s army before coming to England with the new king and queen.<sup>22</sup> Although in England he served as first physician with a salary of £400 per annum, he was more than just a medical man to the king; during the planning leading up to the invasion of England in 1688, he prepared the ciphers and codes that William used to secretly communicate with his supporters.<sup>23</sup> Another Scot educated on the continent, James Welwood, was also a physician in ordinary to William III, although he was in the fourth position and received a salary of only £200 per annum. He also served as a propagandist for the new monarchs, writing the influential political journal *Mercurius Reformatus*. These men were trusted not only with the king’s health, but also

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<sup>20</sup> Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 472.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Lane Furdell, *The Royal Doctors 1485-1714: Medical Personnel at the Tudor and Stuart Courts* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 203.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 203-4. According to Furdell, Peter Silvester (Pierre Silvestre) also came over with William from the Netherlands and although he treated the king’s wound at the Battle of the Boyne, he was never made a royal physician. Both Silvester and Hutton survived the king and remained in Britain for the rest of their lives.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

political secrets. Thomas Lawrence, MD from Padua, was third physician in ordinary and received £250 per annum. Despite the preference for continentally-trained doctors, Sir Thomas Millington, MD from Oxford, was employed as William's second physician in ordinary at a salary of £300 per annum.<sup>24</sup> Although not part of the royal household in England, Dr. John Radcliffe, MD from Oxford, the most famous physician in London at the time, and Dr. Govert Bidloo, MD from Franeker, consulted on the king when medical situations arose.<sup>25</sup>

As William III was such a sickly individual, these physicians spent a great deal of time with the king. A constant struggle for them all, but especially Bidloo, was to keep the swelling in the monarch's legs from hindering his leadership of the war efforts against France. Although Bidloo developed a special regimen to alleviate this swelling, his patient was too stubborn to follow the instructions and continued to suffer from the increasingly problematic issue. But Bidloo remembered his position as someone in service to the king and did not appear slighted that William disregarded his advice. The same could not be said of Radcliffe. On one consultation to the king, when he examined the swelling in the monarch's lower extremities, Radcliffe proclaimed that he would not have William's two legs for his three kingdoms, at which point he "lost the king's favour

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<sup>24</sup> Mary had her own medical establishment, which included two physicians. One of these was Sir Charles Scarborough, an Oxford trained doctor, who had a salary of £300 per annum. For more information on the queen's medical attendants see: "Household of Mary II 1689-1694 Compiled by Ms. Annah Hackett," in *The Database of Court Officers*, ed. Robert Bucholz, <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/MaryII.list.pdf> (accessed June 14, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Furdell, *Royal Doctors*, 206 notes that William III offered Radcliffe a position at court at £200 per annum, but the physician turned it down, figuring he could earn more treating the monarchs when his schedule allowed, rather than having to always be on call. This approach worked; "he made as much as 600 guineas a year by such an arrangement."

and no intercession could ever recover it.”<sup>26</sup> Sometimes the insubordination was not contained to private discussions, as on at least one other occasion, in 1700, Radcliffe was heard at court to be loudly saying that, after examining the king, he had determined William could not live another three months.<sup>27</sup> This would not be the only time that Radcliffe announced his assessment of a monarch’s health in public. He made similarly disparaging comments about Queen Anne, to whom we now turn our attention.

After William III and Mary II failed to produce an heir, the crown fell to Mary’s sister, Anne, in 1702. With the passage of the Act of Settlement in 1701, Anne knew that if she did not produce a child, the crown would pass to the House of Hanover. She tried, both while princess and queen, to deliver a child that would be healthy enough to inherit the throne. Unfortunately, eighteen pregnancies resulted in only one child, William, Duke of Gloucester, who lived beyond infancy. Although he reached the age of eleven, he then died, leaving Queen Anne and Prince George without an heir to succeed them. In addition to her many obstetrical problems, she also suffered from obesity and gout. As a result of her many medical needs, Anne was attended by her physicians on a daily basis.<sup>28</sup>

While many doctors attended the queen throughout her reign, this chapter assesses the actions of only the few who left behind records by which we can judge their roles as courtiers, physicians, and political agents. As in the reign of William and Mary, under Anne there were still only four physicians in ordinary at one time, ranked in order of

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<sup>26</sup> William Munk, *The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), 1:424.

<sup>27</sup> Henri and Barbara Van der Zee, *William and Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 458.

<sup>28</sup> Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 124.

prestige, which was reflected in their annual wages.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, there were extra physicians to the person who were appointed by the Lord Chamberlain's warrant and were paid £200 per year.<sup>30</sup> Doctors were usually brought in to attend the monarch because they possessed a certain set of skills which made them desirable in treating the many conditions of the queen. According to R.O. Bucholz, "most of the medical personnel [during Anne's reign] could point to long lists of significant medical publications and noble patients. It was probably David Hamilton's success in treating feminine disorders that recommended him to the barren [*sic*] Queen."<sup>31</sup> While reputation and skill were important, more than medical knowledge was required of the men who tended to the queen's bodily constitution.

With the difficulties of Anne's health, and the length of her reign, a number of doctors came and went during her time on the throne. From William and Mary's reign, Anne inherited Sir Thomas Millington as her second physician in ordinary. Thomas Lawrence was another holdover from the previous monarch and although he served as the third physician in ordinary to William, he was appointed to the first position under the new queen. Millington served for two years after his appointment in 1702, while

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<sup>29</sup> According to "Medical Establishment: Physicians 1660-1837," in *The Database of Court Officers*, ed. R.O. Bucholz, <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/CHAMBER4.list.pdf> (accessed June 14, 2014), the fourth physician-in-ordinary had been paid £219, but this was changed to £200 just before Anne's reign. All other wages remained the same as under William and Mary. Besides the pay, the only perk, in theory, to being First Physician, was that they could enter the bedchamber without asking for permission. While this perk appeared in the Bedchamber Ordinances, it was not enforced in either the reigns of Queen Anne or King George III. See Casper Frederic Henning Papers, Worcester Record Office, BA 2252/2, f. 67.

<sup>30</sup> "Introduction," in *The Database of Court Officers*, ed. R.O. Bucholz, <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/> (accessed June 14, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 90.



Lawrence had a longer tenure, serving from 1698 to 1714.<sup>32</sup> Other important physicians serving under the queen included Sir Edward Hannes, Martin Lister, Sir David Hamilton, John Arbuthnot, and Sir John Shadwell. Hannes was important to the queen because of his attendance on the Duke of Gloucester, although this took place before Hannes was named a physician to the person in 1702. His career, however, was cut short by illness and he was no longer employed by the royal household after 1709. Lister was appointed on the same day as Hannes, but Lister's specialty was treating patients with gout.<sup>33</sup> This knowledge was especially important to the queen, who suffered from a severe case of the disease.<sup>34</sup> Hamilton came to court as the third physician in ordinary in 1703 and moved up to the second position when Lister died in 1712. John Arbuthnot came into the rank of fourth physician to the person in 1709 and later rose to be the third physician in ordinary.<sup>35</sup> The other important doctor, Sir John Shadwell, was a physician extraordinary before he became the fourth physician in ordinary upon the death of Lister in 1712.<sup>36</sup> Clearly, among the queen's medical attendants, there was room for upward advancement.

Reflecting the advances of empiricism in English medical education, among the physicians who attended Anne, the majority held their medical degree from Oxford. The individuals in this group included Millington, Lister, Shadwell, and Hannes. However,

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<sup>32</sup> Furdell, *Royal Doctors*, 208.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>34</sup> For but one description of the queen's obesity and gout, see James J. Cartwright, ed., *The Wentworth Papers 1705-1739* (London: Wyman & Sons, 1883), 301.

<sup>35</sup> Although the physicians were ranked, the designations were not a chain of command. Anne trusted Hamilton and Arbuthnot over the higher ranked physicians.

<sup>36</sup> Furdell, *Royal Doctors*, 239.

the two doctors Anne trusted the most received their medical education outside of England, a possible indication of their superior medical training. Of the two trusted physicians, Arbuthnot earned his degree from St. Andrews, in Scotland, while the other Scot among the group, Hamilton, received his MD from Reims.<sup>37</sup> As noted earlier, many physicians achieved their court position as a result of their reputation in and around London. While some of the doctors had special medical skills, such as Hamilton's knowledge as a male-midwife and Lister's specialization in treating patients with gout, it was not only medical skill, but also personal connections that helped one achieve a position as a royal physician. Such was the case with Lister, who received his appointment not only for his training, but also through the support of the Earl of Portland.<sup>38</sup>

### **Physicians as Politicians**

As seen in chapter two, Anne's reign was politically charged. While she struggled to work with the Whig MPs and their supporters, it would be natural to assume that she wanted to limit her interactions with members of this party, especially at an intimate level. However, this was not the case. While Anne removed some Whigs from household offices at the beginning of the reign, this was far from the norm. As a result, she remained in close contact with both Whig and Tory physicians. This contact proved useful. For instance, after her falling out with the Duchess of Marlborough in 1708-10, Anne used Hamilton, a Whig, as a political go-between for people she could not be seen meeting

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<sup>37</sup> David Hamilton, *The Diary of Sir David Hamilton 1709-1714*, ed. Philip Roberts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), xix.

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Lane Furdell, "The Medical Personnel at the Court of Queen Anne," *Historian* 48, no. 3 (May 1986): 416.

face-to-face.<sup>39</sup> The queen's relationship with Hamilton did not prevent her from also maintaining close contact with John Arbuthnot, who was a Tory. However, Anne's association with doctors of both parties led to divided medical advice. Part of Arbuthnot's *History of John Bull*, undoubtedly based on his own experiences attending the queen, showed this division. In the work, during a period of alarm, an old gentlewoman, who could easily represent both Queen Anne and the nation as a whole, has become ill. Worried about the woman, John Bull

inquired about her health, the answer was, that 'she was in a good moderate way.' Physicians were sent for in haste: Sir Roger, with great difficulty, brought Radcliffe; Garth came upon the first message. There were several others called in; but, as usual upon such occasions, they differed strangely at the consultation. At last they divided into two parties, one sided with Garth, the other with Radcliffe.<sup>40</sup>

Despite this type of experience, the queen maintained her relationship with physicians of both parties until her death.

Nevertheless, there were certain doctors whose political affiliations and temperament removed them from consideration when it came to treating the queen. The most famous physician in this regard was John Radcliffe, the same doctor who alienated and spread rumors about William III. Despite his excellent reputation in the medical field, Radcliffe was "a confirmed Jacobite and violent tory" who opposed the Revolution of 1688 to 1689.<sup>41</sup> He had proven himself initially as a capable doctor and endeared

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<sup>39</sup> W. F. Bynum, "Medicine at the English Court, 1688-1837," in *Medicine at the Courts of Europe, 1500-1837*, ed. Vivian Nutton (London: Routledge, 1990), 277.

<sup>40</sup> George A. Aitken, *The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 250, n. 5 clarifies, "Garth, the low-church party; Radcliffe, the high-church party."

<sup>41</sup> Alex Sakula, "Dr. John Radcliffe, Court Physician, and the Death of Queen Anne," *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London* 19 (1985): 256.

himself to Anne when he helped restore the Duke of Gloucester to health in 1691. Yet, Radcliffe threw all of this good favor away three years later. While drinking at a tavern, he was summoned by Anne to check on her health, but he dismissed her illness as nothing but vapors and publically declared, “she was in as good a state of health as any woman breathing, could she but give into the belief of it.”<sup>42</sup> The example of Radcliffe’s dismissive nature ties in with Bucholz’s claim that, “professional competence, no matter how important for the Queen’s medical personnel, could not entirely make up for personal or political incompatibility.”<sup>43</sup>

As Anne’s reign progressed, the physicians she was able to tolerate increased in importance. Information about her health was in high demand, especially in the later part of her time on the throne, but there were few reliable ways in which such information could be obtained, a situation that Arbuthnot tried to maintain through a policy of disinformation and concealment.<sup>44</sup> Sending an ambassador to visit the court and look at the queen was useful, but in order for this to work, it would require a constant series of drawing room assemblies, which did not take place under Anne.<sup>45</sup> Instead, interested parties had to use the physicians to gain insight into the queen’s well-being, since they were almost constantly in attendance.<sup>46</sup> As a result, their public reports had wide

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<sup>42</sup> J.B. Nias, *Dr. John Radcliffe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1918), 18.

<sup>43</sup> Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 90.

<sup>44</sup> For examples of this type of policy see H.M.C., *Downshire I*, ii:854 and Cartwright, 188. For more on this see Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 338, n. 204. Cartwright, 138 shows that Peter Wentworth realized the importance of what Arbuthnot had to say about Queen Anne’s health.

<sup>45</sup> Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 184-5.

influence, while the secret correspondence they had with politicians was even more important. Unfortunately, the political biases of the physicians led to the dissemination of inaccurate reports of the queen's health.<sup>47</sup> Such inaccuracies are apparent in the petition that Shadwell submitted to George I after he gained the throne. The doctor, a strong supporter of the Hanoverians, claimed that, unlike his colleagues, he provided accurate information to the Lords of the Council, "that they might take the necessary precautions for the security of the Protestant succession."<sup>48</sup> Shadwell's claim to the Lords of the Council meshes with a comment Arbuthnot related to Jonathan Swift in October 1714. Anne's Tory physician noted, "Shadwell says, he will have my place of Chelsea [Hospital]. Garth told me his merit was, giving intelligence about his mistress's health" to the supporters of George I.<sup>49</sup> Despite his failing as a courtier under Anne, Shadwell's actions certainly paid off, as he was appointed physician in ordinary to both George I and George II, something that cannot be said for the more loyal doctors who attended the last Stuart.

Shadwell's is the most straightforward example of a medical attendant using his position as gatekeeper of information about the monarch's health to gain favor with the

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<sup>46</sup> H.M.C., *Fifteenth Report, Appendix IV*, 436 records a letter from Erasmus Lewis to Thomas Harley, May 7, 1714, which reads: "I saw your friend Dr. Arbuthnot this afternoon, who told me her Majesty was much better."

<sup>47</sup> Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 185-6. For Arbuthnot's response to one such politicized medical report, see Jonathan Swift, *Journal to Stella*, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), 2:561-2. For Swift's feeling towards these politicized physicians, see Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 1:311: "You must understand I have a mind to do a small thing, only turn out all the queen's physicians; for in my conscience they will soon kill her among them."

<sup>48</sup> H.M.C., *Eighth Report, Appendix I*, 50.

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Swift, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.*, ed. F. Elrington Ball (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1911), 2:246-7.

Hanoverians. His actions contrast with those of John Arbuthnot. He was in an important position to provide more accurate information than Shadwell, as Arbuthnot enjoyed the queen's complete confidence. Some scholars, most notably Donald Burrows, claim that Arbuthnot used George Frederick Handel to pass reports of Anne's health to the Elector of Hanover. As Burrows has pointed out, when Handel visited London in 1710, it "suited the foreign policy of the Hanoverians. The Elector and his Court were looking towards the forthcoming British inheritance throughout the last years of Queen Anne's reign.... A German advance party ... was obviously desirable ... to act as a damper on potential Jacobite influence."<sup>50</sup> It is clear that there was not only a desire to find out information about the queen, but also a wish to limit the amount of resistance that was developing at court to the idea of passing the crown to the Hanoverians.

In order to fully assess the case that Burrows makes for Arbuthnot being a medical informer for the Hanoverians, a little bit of background about his relationship with Handel is required. The third physician had a strong interest in music and was a "founding subscriber and member of the court of directors of the Royal Academy of Music," in addition to helping manage Handel's Italian operas when they were performed in London.<sup>51</sup> Not only was Arbuthnot influential in the music scene, he was also regarded as the queen's favorite, at least according to the accounts provided by Swift.<sup>52</sup> If

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<sup>50</sup>Donald James Burrows, "Handel and the English Chapel Royal During the Reigns of Queen Anne and King George I" (PhD diss., Open University, 1981), 1:58-9.

<sup>51</sup> Angus Ross, "Arbuthnot, John (*bap.* 1667, *d.* 1735)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/610> (accessed March 3, 2014).

<sup>52</sup> Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 1:239.

Arbuthnot really was Anne's favorite, he possessed not only her medical information but her trust in other matters.

Yet, he was not the only physician to earn the good faith of the queen. At the crux of the argument for Arbuthnot's supposed role in providing information to the queen's successors is a letter from Kreyenberg, a Hanoverian resident in London, to Hanover. It reads:

London 5/16 June 1713

A few days ago I wrote to you on the subject of Mr. Handel, that since His Highness was determined to dismiss him, Mr. Handel submitted to that wish, and that he desired nothing save that the affair be conducted with a good grace and that he should be given a little time here so that he could enter the Queen's service. Moreover, it seems to me from your letters that this was precisely the generous intention of His Highness.... I will admit to you frankly that Mr. Handel is nothing to me, but at the same time I must say that if I had been given a free hand for a week or two I could have resolved the whole affair to the satisfaction of both His Highness and Mr. Handel, and even to the benefit of the Elector's service. The Queen's doctor, who is an important man and enjoys the Queen's confidence, is his grand patron and friend, and has the composer constantly at his house. Mr. Handel could have been extremely useful, as he has been on several occasions, by giving me information of circumstances which have often enlightened me as to the condition of the Queen's health.... You must know that our Whigs rarely know anything about the Queen's health. (In return) since the Queen is more avid for stories about Hanover than for anything else, the Doctor can satisfy her from his own information: you understand the stories to which I am referring.<sup>53</sup>

From this letter, two things are clear. The first is that a doctor was providing information about the queen's health, to Handel, who then passed it on to the Hanoverians. The second is that no doctor is specifically named. The fact that the letter contains a mention of Whig politicians is interesting, especially because Arbuthnot was a Tory.

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<sup>53</sup> Burrows, 1:99-100.

To better understand who John Arbuthnot was, let us examine a piece of literature that he wrote in 1712 entitled, *The Art of Political Lying*.<sup>54</sup> In this work he satirizes what actions are acceptable for the political parties and those who are in positions of government authority. At the same time, it can also be seen as an etiquette book for how a courtier should act. To the author, political lying was, “the art of convincing the people of salutary falsehoods, for some good end.”<sup>55</sup> The preceding line is one of only a few potentially serious passages throughout the text. At another point in the piece, Arbuthnot states that, “people have a right to private truth from their neighbors, and economical truth from their own family; that they should not be abused by their wives, children, and servants, but that they have no right at all to Political truth.”<sup>56</sup>

In another passage of *The Art of Political Lying*, Arbuthnot writes, “if it be spread about, that a great person were dying of some disease, you must not say the truth, that they are in health, and never had such a disease, but that they are slowly recovering of it.”<sup>57</sup> It is possible that part of Arbuthnot’s strategy was to release false information, in addition to suppressing what he could of the truth, in regards to Anne’s health. According to a letter written by Peter Wentworth, an equerry at court, to his brother, Thomas, “what Doctor Alburtunote & Dicken & Blundel the surgeons say as to the Queen’s State of health is not to be minded for God knows they have often said she was very well, when it

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<sup>54</sup> John Arbuthnot, “The Art of Political Lying,” in *The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot*, ed. George Aitken (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 293-303.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 295-6.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 302-3.



has been known to be otherwise, but those are pious frauds & very allowable.”<sup>58</sup> In this regard, Arbuthnot was following the type of thinking he laid out in *The Art of Political Lying*. He wanted to make sure people were confused as to the queen’s true state of health but that the end result worked in her favor. By making sure that the Whigs could not exploit the queen’s ailing constitution, the doctor helped preserve her mystique, influence, and authority.

Not only does it appear from his political affiliations that Arbuthnot was unlikely to assist Hanover, but he was specifically well-known in that he did not provide accurate information about the queen’s poor health. In a different letter, Peter Wentworth commented that the doctor, “always had a mind to keep the Queen’s illness a secret [sic].”<sup>59</sup> Bucholz points out that the physician was loyal, both to the Tories and to the queen, not only because of shared political ideologies, but because he was her servant.<sup>60</sup> Arbuthnot demonstrated his adherence to both Anne and her politics when, on July 29, 1714, he was reluctant to call together a general consultation of “the royal physicians lest Mead, who was a Whig, should hear the words she was constantly murmuring about the Pretender.”<sup>61</sup> However, most important is the conclusion of a correspondence that the doctor conducted with Swift. While earlier it was pointed out that Shadwell had confronted Arbuthnot and said that he, Shadwell, had provided information to the Hanoverians, the third physician wrote to Swift that, “I desired he [Garth] would do me

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<sup>58</sup> As quoted in Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 185.

<sup>59</sup> Cartwright, 408.

<sup>60</sup> Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 185.

<sup>61</sup> Arbuthnot, 75.

the favour to say, that I valued myself upon quite the contrary, and I hoped to live to see the day, when his Majesty [George I] would value me the more for it too.”<sup>62</sup> In essence, Arbuthnot was stating that he hoped he would be given a place under the new king because during Anne’s reign, the physician had proven himself to be an individual who could provide valuable medical service, while still keeping information about the monarch’s health to himself. In addition to never serving George I, all of Arbuthnot’s actions and words make it difficult to see why he has been suspected of exploiting his position as information gatekeeper and betraying the queen.

The preceding paragraphs show that there is considerable ambiguity surrounding the identity of the physician who was providing information to the Hanoverians. Sources show that Arbuthnot did spend a good deal of time with the queen; however, in the long run, he had very little influence on her policies.<sup>63</sup> Another physician who had significant periods of attendance on the queen, and shared a political affiliation with the Whigs, was Sir David Hamilton. The case for his position as disseminator of confidential information is considerably stronger, although less flashy. He was not widely known to be in touch with Handel or to be a strong supporter of the music scene. However, Hamilton’s diary, in a shortened version, has survived to the present day and contains considerable information about his attempts to influence the queen in the last years of her life. His record shows, “subtle and not so subtle attempts to build up the Whigs and plant seeds of

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<sup>62</sup> Swift, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, 2:246-7.

<sup>63</sup> Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 179. Bucholz, 186, has shown that Arbuthnot was the only physician to have “lodgings in all of her principal residences.” For people commenting about how close Arbuthnot always was to Anne, see Cartwright, 138 and 360 and Swift, *Journal to Stella*, 2:561-2.

doubt about the Tory ministry in the Queen's mind."<sup>64</sup> As the Kreyenberg letter states, the queen was asking for information about the Hanoverian court, which would likely occur in a private setting, since she outwardly expressed to Lord Cowper that her greatest fear was that members of the House of Hanover would come to England.<sup>65</sup> Hamilton's diary makes multiple references to his frustration when he was unable to meet privately with the queen to discuss political matters, because other physicians were in attendance.<sup>66</sup> Another reason to consider that Hamilton might have been the informant was that he feared being below Shadwell under George I, a legitimate concern for a man whose specialty was midwifery.<sup>67</sup> Hamilton's distribution of medical details about the queen's health was a way to show his willingness to work for the Elector while the doctor's closeness with Anne ensured his information was more complete than anything Shadwell might provide.<sup>68</sup>

Knowing that there was such a high emphasis placed on information regarding the monarch's health, the Whigs always capitalized on any account of the queen's illness and made it appear that she was in worse health than was the case. As a result of this, the Whig leadership was, "all the more dependent upon physicians of their own persuasion for accurate news of the Queen's condition."<sup>69</sup> Hamilton recorded towards the end of the

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<sup>64</sup> Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 179.

<sup>65</sup> Hamilton, 60.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60.

<sup>67</sup> Furdell, *Royal Doctors*, 238.

<sup>68</sup> Hamilton retained a medical position after the Hanoverian succession, although it was as physician to Caroline, Princess of Wales, not to the monarch.

reign that, while meeting with Anne, she asked him whether or not there was a way that he could go to Hanover without attracting suspicion that he was there on behalf of the queen.<sup>70</sup> If she was contemplating sending him to Hanover, he must have demonstrated knowledge of continental affairs, possibly of the type that Handel could provide. The amount of faith required for the queen to suggest such an undertaking to Hamilton must have been apparent and contributed to the view that he was as “trusted an adviser as she had during the last five years of her life.”<sup>71</sup> However, the most damning piece of evidence that shows Hamilton’s betrayal comes in the form of the information available to him. According to Ragnhild Hatton, by comparing information recorded by Hamilton in his diary after a conversation with Queen Anne, and the contents of a letter sent to Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg, it is clear that the medical details sent to Hanover could only have come from the Whig doctor.<sup>72</sup>

During the reign of Queen Anne, doctors were in a position to control the flow of important information. Shadwell and Hamilton struggled to be good courtiers who placed the sovereign’s interests above their own. On the other hand, Arbuthnot, with his adherence to loyalty and honor, served as a model example of a courtier. He had the queen’s best interests at heart, even though he protected these interests through

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<sup>69</sup> Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 186.

<sup>70</sup> Hamilton, 66.

<sup>71</sup> Bynum, 277.

<sup>72</sup> Ragnhild M. Hatton, “New Light on George I of Great Britain,” in *England’s Rise to Greatness, 1660-1763*, ed. Stephen B. Baxter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 252, n. 112. Having not viewed the contents of the letter sent to Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg, I still retain some doubt as to whether or not Hamilton was the informant referenced in the Kreyenberg letter. Shadwell was also a Whig, came from an articulate family associated with the arts, and claimed he gave the Hanoverians details on Anne’s health. Plus, he received a more prestigious position under the new dynasty than Hamilton.

manipulation and deception. Shadwell and Hamilton, in the end, focused their attention on a new prince, the Elector of Hanover, rather than their current queen.

### **A Faithful Equerry**

Non-medical household servants during Anne's reign also ran the gamut from faithful courtier to significant information leak to an opposing political party. One of the faithful individuals, mentioned earlier, was an equerry named Peter Wentworth. He took his oath seriously to know nothing hurtful about the queen and in his own way, worked to defend her interests. Wentworth's presence near Anne meant that he frequently was privy to her many ailments and based on their shared political adherence to the Tories, he was able to consult Dr. Arbuthnot for more details.<sup>73</sup> The equerry's service to the queen involved more than just consulting with her Tory physician, as Wentworth conveyed his knowledge of her health to his brother, Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford. Strafford was a diplomat in Berlin from 1703 to April 1711 before he moved to The Hague in December 1711. His service to Anne is evident in his appointment as second plenipotentiary to the peace congress in Utrecht at the end of December 1711. Much to his dismay, Strafford was frequently in the dark about concessions made in the secret negotiations and was reliant on his brother's accounts from court and London to learn the latest details.<sup>74</sup> An example of this relationship is apparent in a letter from October 7, 1712 when Peter wrote, "'Tis not my business to trouble my head with politicks, but you

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<sup>73</sup> Cartwright, 138 and 360.

<sup>74</sup> "Wentworth, Thomas, first earl of Strafford (1672–1739)," Marsha Frey in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29059> (accessed August 13, 2014).

have order'd me to write what people say.... Here follows a paragraph about Dr.

'Alburnight' and the state of the Queen's health, expressed in the plainest terms."<sup>75</sup>

In September 1713 Peter Wentworth promised his brother, "You may depend on't I'll have my eyes about me & refrain my tongue from speaking."<sup>76</sup> The equerry's observations of Anne's health had, by that time, been occurring for years. At times these accounts were simple, as in April 1711 when Wentworth wrote "The Queen went out to day to take the air...."<sup>77</sup> But at other times, keeping in mind the dignity of the crown he swore an oath to protect, Wentworth passed accounts of the queen's health that quashed negative rumors. For instance, on November 27, 1711, the equerry wrote to Strafford: "The Queen was at the Chapel last Sunday and was so well as to see company in her bedchamber afterwards. I writ you this good news because some people have made it their business to spread abroad a report as if she was dangerously ill."<sup>78</sup> Such false reports were especially problematic in light of the ongoing negotiations over the Treaty of Utrecht. Recognizing how important his information was to his brother, especially during the tense negotiations, Wentworth continued to supply his sibling with reports on Anne's health, including one from July 1712, in which he noted the queen "has the use of her limbs more then I have known her for this 5 or 6 years past."<sup>79</sup> Similarly to Arbuthnot,

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<sup>75</sup> Cartwright, 302. Unfortunately, the actual paragraph describing Anne's health is not included in the collection.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Wentworth to Thomas, 1st Earl of Strafford, September 12, 1712, British Library, Add MS 31144, f. 412v as cited in Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 184.

<sup>77</sup> Cartwright, 193.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

Wentworth used his knowledge of the queen's bodily constitution to support her political objectives. Although he was not in a position where he could manipulate the flow of information as effectively as Anne's favorite physician, the equerry was able to supply the British contingent at Utrecht with accounts of the queen's health while the fate of Europe hung in the balance.

### **Anne's Women of the Bedchamber**

While Wentworth maintained a watchful eye at court, his attendance as a household servant did not generate the same type of political buzz as two of the females serving in Queen Anne's bedchamber. Far and away the most famous household servant of the last Stuart monarch was Sarah Duchess of Marlborough. She held many offices, including Woman of the Bedchamber, Groom of the Stole, Mistress of the Robes, and Keeper of the Privy Purse. Any one of these positions would have given her considerable power, but all of the offices vested in one person meant that Sarah had more chances than most to protect the dignity of the crown and limit access to the queen. Gilbert Burnet described the situation as: "Queen Anne ... opens herself to so few ... that people soon find that the chief application is to be made to her Ministers and favourites, who in their turns have an entire credit and full power with her."<sup>80</sup> Due to the Duchess of Marlborough's affiliation with the Whigs, she used her influence, as best she could, to keep Tories away from Anne. An example of this occurred when James Johnston, a Tory MP for Ilchester from 1708 to 1712, attempted to pay his respects to the queen but,

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<sup>80</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Time. From the Restoration of King Charles II, to the Conclusion of the Treaty of Peace at Utrecht, in the Reign of Queen Anne* (London: A. Millar, 1753), 4:449. Despite Burnet's claim that her favorites and ministers had full power with Anne, in *The Augustan Court*, Robert Bucholz has convincingly shown that Anne was not just a puppet for those around her, but was an effective and engaged ruler in her own right.

“observing the Duchess of Marlborough to look upon him with anger, he retired to his country seat and fine gardens.”<sup>81</sup> Although access to Anne was never as strictly regulated as the Tory Jonathan Swift claimed in 1710, when he observed that “the Queen [was] hemmed in, and as it were imprisoned, by the Duchess of Marlborough,” her actions relating to who she allowed near the queen certainly seem at odds with her sworn oath to do nothing prejudicial to the monarch.<sup>82</sup>

The infamous falling out between Anne and the Duchess of Marlborough led to Sarah forgetting the other half of her oath, the part about hindering any information that might hurt or diminish the dignity of the crown.<sup>83</sup> In June and July 1710, reading the writing on the wall that Anne was preparing to dismiss her from the royal household, the duchess reminded the queen of all the promises made to her over the years in a series of private letters. Using Sir David Hamilton as a go-between, who recounted the tense period in his diary, Sarah claimed that she was Anne’s “faithful servant,” but the public attacks on the duchess’ character spewing from Tory pens “may force her to Print what

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<sup>81</sup> As quoted in Kathleen Campbell, *Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1932), 166.

<sup>82</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Historical And Political Tracts-English*, ed. Temple Scott, vol. 5 of *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, D.D.* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1907), 5:374.. In terms of reporting on the queen’s health, Sarah undoubtedly passed this information along to her husband and Sidney Godolphin. Even when Sarah was not present to wait on the queen, Anne sent the duchess letters related to her health. For examples see Beatrice C. Brown, ed. *The Letters and Diplomatic Instructions of Queen Anne* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968), 105 and 127.

<sup>83</sup> Sarah verbally and emotionally abused Queen Anne for years and while the queen had initially welcomed a casual style of communication between the two, as the reign progressed, the duchess’ conduct became obstinate and unacceptable, eventually causing the two to have a falling out that culminated with the return of Sarah’s golden key of office on January 18, 1711. For more descriptive accounts of this fight, see Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 76-80, 175, and 183 and Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne*, new ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 297-329.



has happene'd, for her own Justification."<sup>84</sup> Anne's feud with Sarah was already complicated because the duchess' husband was the Captain-General of the allied forces fighting in the War of the Spanish Succession. On top of this, now the queen feared that her private letters would be published. She attempted to persuade Sarah to return them but the "many Approaches to her [were] in vain."<sup>85</sup> Despite the queen's requests to return the private letters, and both the Duke of Devonshire and the Duke of Marlborough, upon seeing a copy of Sarah's "famous history that is to bee" and instructing her "not to make publick the harsh usidge she has meet with," the duchess continued to threaten publication.<sup>86</sup> Hamilton's description of Sarah's comments on July 10, 1710 reads:

I acquainted her [the queen] of my Lady Marlborough's Design to Print, and in it would be cantayn'd what would reflect upon her Majestys Piety, such as breaches of Promise and Asseverations, and when a quarrell hapen'd between a Prince and a favorite, it was not like a quarrel between two private persons, but spread through all Countrys, and sully that reputation for Piety, Sense, and good nature, which her Majesty had every where so justly acquir'd.<sup>87</sup>

The Duchess of Marlborough's betrayal of her courtier's oath was reaching unprecedented levels.

The back and forth over publication of Sarah's 'justification' cooled during the late summer until a Jonathan Swift attack on the Marlboroughs on November 28, 1710 led Sarah to write to Hamilton, knowing he would share with the queen, that she was outraged by the treatment she received in the press. The way she was "cry'd about the

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<sup>84</sup> Hamilton, 10-12.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>86</sup> As quoted in Gregg, 325.

<sup>87</sup> Hamilton, 12.

country for a common cheat & pickpocket is too much for human nature to bear” and she threatened “to publish other papers of a very different kind” to defend her honor.<sup>88</sup>

Despite a slight lull in the tension, a January 10, 1711 meeting between Anne and the Duke of Marlborough made it clear that even with Sarah’s threat to publish a ‘tell-all’ book, her removal from the royal household was no longer a matter of debate. Upon hearing this news the duchess menacingly told Hamilton, “Such Things are in my Power, that if known by a Man, that would apprehend, and was a right Politian might lose a Crown. But I shall do nothing against her which I would not have done 20 years a go, unless Provok’d.”<sup>89</sup>

After the return of Sarah’s golden key of office on January 18, 1711, there was no sudden publication of Anne’s letters. Edward Gregg has argued that the duchess’ discretion in this matter was not the result of her having a sudden change of heart, but because Anne agreed to allow her former Groom of the Stole to wipe out a debt of nearly £21,000 borrowed from the Privy Purse in exchange for the letters not being made public.<sup>90</sup> Nothing was very clearly spelled out about this arrangement, as seen by Sarah’s contemplation of publishing her version of events in February 1712, once her husband had been dismissed from the queen’s service as well. Rather than any remembrance of the oath she once swore to Anne, it took the diplomatic skills of Robert Walpole to convince the duchess to hold off publishing her manuscript.<sup>91</sup> It was not until 1742, years

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<sup>88</sup> Gregg, 325-6.

<sup>89</sup> Hamilton, 27.

<sup>90</sup> Gregg, 329.

after she extorted and blackmailed Queen Anne, taking for granted the oath she swore upon beginning her service in the royal household, that Sarah's *An Account of the Conduct of the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough* was finally published.

Fortunately for Anne, her next favorite, Abigail Lady Masham, due to her lower social rank, never received any compromising letters that could be used against the queen, nor did she factor into political discussions or have much say in patronage.<sup>92</sup> Rather, Masham used her position as a woman of the bedchamber to act as a go-between for the queen and the Tories, in particular her cousin the Earl of Oxford. She also happened to be in a position to report on the queen's health during her most serious illnesses in the last few years of Anne's reign. In this capacity, Masham was helpful to the Tory position after the change of ministries in 1710. In some cases, such as when the queen was ill on September 18, 1712, Lady Masham verified a report to Oxford he already had from Arbuthnot and then added the latest news. Masham informed the Lord Treasurer that upon Anne's rising from bed that morning, "she is very free from any fever, feels herself pretty well ... no pain in her head or any where else."<sup>93</sup>

At other times, Masham took the initiative to caution her cousin about Anne's health. In the aftermath of the queen's serious illness at the end of December 1713, Masham wrote to Oxford in the hopes that he would quickly attend on the sovereign, but he declined, instead riding around town in a coach to prevent people from panicking that

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<sup>91</sup> Frances Harris, *A Passion for Government: The Life of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 188-9.

<sup>92</sup> Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, 163-6.

<sup>93</sup> H.M.C., *Fifteenth Report, Appendix IV*, 222-3.

Anne was dead.<sup>94</sup> Although Masham did not have the same savvy political nature as the Lord Treasurer, in her role as a household servant, she was still able to provide him with insight gained by her close attendance of the queen. At the end of January 1714, while the monarch continued to recover from her illness the previous Christmas, Lady Masham informed her cousin:

I must tell you from myself I do not think the Queen so well as she was when you saw her last. I pray God you may find her better than I think her at present; in the night, last night, she was much sunk with 'stoiles,' but I thank God a little better this morning, and continues better, but is still, in my opinion, far from well. I should be mighty glad your Lordship were able to come, and when you are, pray do; what I write concerning her health she knows nothing of, neither would I for the world have her know it, for our business must be to hearten her, for she is too apprehensive already of her ill state of health; I don't think of my own uneasiness my concern is so great for her....<sup>95</sup>

Although she was sharing the information about the queen's health with Oxford, the tone of the letter reflects the upright behavior of Lady Masham in keeping with her courtier's oath. She made herself useful to her sovereign through her ability to pass messages back and forth with the Tories. In the end, Jonathan's Swift summation of Abigail, although he was admittedly quite fond of her, rings true. The woman of the bedchamber was "full of love, duty and veneration for the Queen her mistress," and she never wrote a tell-all book.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> David Green, *Queen Anne* (London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1970), 295.

<sup>95</sup> H.M.C., *Fifteenth Report, Appendix IV*, 381.

<sup>96</sup> Brown, 105.

### **The Importance of Family**

We have so far seen how physicians and non-medical household servants played various roles in passing and suppressing medical information during the reigns of the later Stuarts. The situation remained mostly the same during the reigns of the first two Hanoverians, although in the case of George II, there appears to have been a change in tactics in dealing with periods of poor royal health. His physicians, just like Anne's, continued to communicate information about the king's constitution to his ministers, such as in March 1756 when Dr. Edward Wilmot followed up his consultations on the monarch by sending his assessment of the sovereign's health to the Duke of Newcastle, the prime minister.<sup>97</sup> According to the standards of the courtier's oath, Wilmot was well within his rights of conveying the latest news of George II suffering from a severe fever and taking this information, not to the public, but to Newcastle, a member of the king's Privy Council.

During the reign of George II, it was not only physicians talking to ministers about the king's health. Instead, there appears to have been recognition that with the continuing development of daily newspaper, reports about the sovereign's health were going to be published. Rather than allow opponents of Robert Walpole or the supporters of Frederick, Prince of Wales to control the information that was going out, Queen Caroline and the princesses frequently dropped hints on how the king was feeling. The

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<sup>97</sup> Newcastle Papers, Vol. CLXXIX, Dr. Wilmot to the Duke of Newcastle, March 26 and March 27, 1756, British Library, Add MS 32864, f. 1, 8r. George II had a number of famous physicians as his physicians in ordinary over his long reign. Sir Hans Sloane, MD from the University of Orange, was his first physician and had also served Queen Anne. Richard Mead, the wealthiest physician of his age, MD from Padua, also was made a physician in ordinary upon George's ascension to the throne in 1727. John Hollings and Sir Edward Wilmot, both received their MD from Cambridge, while Sir John Shadwell, who, like Sloane treated three monarchs, had his MD from Oxford. Beginning in 1727, all physicians earned £300 per annum.

courtier Lord Hervey recognized that there seemed to be an impulse among members of the family to deny when they were sick and instead construct a facade of good health. This was not possible at all times, so instead of silence and speculation, the family members provided reassurance to anyone who inquired about the monarch's health. For instance, in 1737, when George II was quite ill, Hervey recorded that, "Whilst he [the king] grew every day worse and worse, it was every day by the Queen and Princesses given out that he was better and better."<sup>98</sup> The same was true in 1751 when Mr. Wall, the Spanish ambassador, was trying to determine if there was any truth to the reports of "some disaffected persons who say he [George II] cannot recover, and that he has three or four mortal disorders."<sup>99</sup> While at court, Wall learned that the king was better, but what affirmed this report for him was that "it has been confirmed to me by Princess Amelia and particularly the Countess of Yarmouth" [the king's mistress].<sup>100</sup> The immediate family of George II provided this extra level of "protection" when the subject of his health arose, something that the last three Stuarts and the first Hanoverian lacked.<sup>101</sup> However, this system worked only when the consort and children knew the truth about

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<sup>98</sup> Romney Sedgwick, ed., *Some Material Towards Memoirs of the Reign of King George II by John, Lord Hervey* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1931), 3:656.

<sup>99</sup> John Bedford, *Correspondence of John, Fourth Duke of Bedford Selected from the Originals at Woburn Abbey* (London: Longman, 1843), 2:74-5.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:75.

<sup>101</sup> George I did not have a wife and only had two children. His daughter was already living in Prussia by the time he became King of England, and George and his son, the future George II, had such a strained relationship, it is unlikely that he would have confided any health concerns to his future heir and head of the opposition, or that his son would have actively helped strengthen his father's political position.

what ailed the monarch and Parliament did not intervene, something that was not the case for George III's family during 1788 to 1789.<sup>102</sup>

### Physicians at the Court of George III

The various health crises of George III's reign afford another opportunity to look at the experiences of royal physicians.<sup>103</sup> Some aspects of George's medical care were different from Anne's simply because he was male, and different from all the other monarchs discussed since his reign was almost sixty years. These features of George's time on the throne affected the length of service for some of the court physicians and their specialties, but in other respects, the details about the doctors who monitored the health of the king are comparable to those from Anne's reign. The sicknesses that affected George III are numerous and widely known. During his lifetime, people believed that he was mentally ill, although recent scholarship has argued for both porphyria and bipolar disorder as the actual cause.<sup>104</sup> Through the records of the various physicians who

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<sup>102</sup> During the crisis of 1788-9, Queen Charlotte did not make much effort to disseminate medical information, as she was, to a certain degree, kept in the dark. However, the one time she told the physicians to change the phrasing of a bulletin, she found her actions called into question by the MPs in the Commons. See *Bell's Cheap Edition, Report from the Committee, Appointed to Examine the Physicians who have Attended His Majesty, During his Illness, Touching the Present State of His Majesty's Health*, 3rd ed. (London: J. Bell, 1789), 13, 84; "Diary of John Willis During George III's Illness 1788-1789," Willis Papers, Volume II, British Library, Add MS 41691, f. 40-7; "Letters of Hon. Frederick Robinson," John, 2nd Lord Boringdon to Hon. Frederick Robinson, January 20, 1789, Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, 1259/1/86; Bland Burges Papers, James Bland Burges to Anne Bland Burges, January 10, 1789, Dept. 8 Bland Burges, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, f. 149r; Robert Fulke Greville, *The Diaries of Colonel the Hon. Robert Fulke Greville, Equerry to His Majesty King George III*, ed. F. McKno Bladon (London: John Lane, 1930), 133-6.

<sup>103</sup> For coverage of more of the physicians who attended George III see Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969) and W. F. Bynum, "Medicine at the English Court, 1688-1837," in *Medicine at the Courts of Europe, 1500-1837*, ed. Vivian Nutton (London: Routledge, 1990), 277-289.

<sup>104</sup> For the porphyria claim see: Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, "A Clinical Reassessment of the 'Insanity' of George III and Some of its Historical Implications," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical*

treated the monarch, a picture develops of fevers, abdominal pains, non-sensical talking, and spasms.

While a number of different doctors attended the king during his reign, some played greater roles than others. For the purpose of this study, Sir George Baker, Richard Warren, Reverend Francis Willis, his son Dr. John Willis, William Heberden the Elder, his son William Heberden the Younger, Thomas Gisborne, Anthony Addington, Sir Lucas Pepys, and Henry Revell Reynolds will be considered. Out of all of these medical men, none obtained their degree from outside of Britain, a sign of just how far British medical training had improved since the start of the century. Baker, Warren, Heberden, Gisborne, and Reynolds attended Cambridge. The others on the list attended Oxford, with the exception of John Willis. He received his medical training at the University of Edinburgh. Of those physicians noted above, only five of them were ever office holders at the court of George III – Baker, Warren, Pepys, Heberden the Younger, and Reynolds.<sup>105</sup> There were still only four physicians in ordinary at any one time and since the change established during the reign of George II, each was paid £300 per annum.<sup>106</sup> The remaining doctors were brought in for their specialties but not made part of the royal household. They received payment differently. In 1789, Dr. John Willis received £650 a year for life, while the following May Reverend Francis Willis received a pension from

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*Research* 40, no. 102 (November 1967): 183. For the bipolar claim see: Timothy Peters, “King George III, Bipolar Disorder, Porphyria and Lessons for Historians,” *Clinical Medicine* 11, no. 3 (2011): 261-4.

<sup>105</sup> “Medical Establishment: Physicians 1660-1837,” in *The Database of Court Officers*, ed. R.O. Bucholz, <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/CHAMBER4.list.pdf> (accessed February 26, 2014). Warren was physician to George III back in 1762, but by the time of 1788, Warren was the Prince of Wales’ physician.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* Physicians received traveling wages as well. For instance, during George III’s illness in 1788-9, the physicians earned £30 per visit to Windsor and £10 per visit to Kew. Arthur Aspinall, ed., *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales 1770-1812* (London: Cassell, 1963), 1:499-500.



Parliament of £1000 per annum for twenty one years.<sup>107</sup> These funds were both payment for services rendered and rewards for their service to the king during the Regency Crisis.

In addition to medical specialization and reputation, such as the Willis family and their work with the mentally ill or Warren, who “arrived early at the highest practice ... and maintained his supremacy to the last,” patronage was still an important way through which people obtained positions at court.<sup>108</sup> Such was the case with Sir George Baker, who received his first royal appointment through the influence of his supporter, Dr. William Heberden the Elder.<sup>109</sup> Richard Warren received his position as doctor to George III in 1762 through the influence of Dr. Edward Wilmot.<sup>110</sup> Despite all physicians in ordinary earning the same salary, there were still fights about rankings. An example of this type of conflict was displayed when Warren went before a parliamentary committee and explained that he was considered the first physician in the eyes of the Prince of Wales, even if the other doctors in attendance did not agree with his assessment.<sup>111</sup>

### Physicians in Charge

The politics of the medical specialists who attended King George III were just as, if not more, important than the politics of Anne’s doctors. Warren was a strong Whig supporter and contemporaries complained that his negative prognosis of the king’s health

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<sup>107</sup> Macalpine and Hunter, *Mad Business*, 95.

<sup>108</sup> Munk, 2:205-6. The Willis family ran a mad-house in Lincolnshire. The reputation Francis Willis gained at this asylum led to his being called in once the king’s mental health situation grew worse.

<sup>109</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, November 11-13, 1788, Issue 6467.

<sup>110</sup> D'A. Power, “Warren, Richard (1731–1797),” rev. Catherine Bergin, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28788> (accessed February 5, 2014).

<sup>111</sup> *Bell’s Cheap Edition*, 94. Officially, Baker was the first physician.

was based on political allegiance and not on sound medical knowledge.<sup>112</sup> Since the Whigs in Parliament believed it an appropriate time to establish a regency with the Prince of Wales in charge, while the Tories felt that the king was still capable of heading the executive, intense focus was paid to the observations of the physicians who attended the monarch and whether or not they believed the king would recover. The most significant political crisis occurred between October 1788 and March 1789, when the king suffered from an extremely high fever and a subsequent loss of decorum, which led to bouts of extreme violence and instability. At one point, Warren forcibly stated to Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger that, “the physicians could now have no hesitation in pronouncing that the actual disorder was that of lunacy” and that “the King might never recover.”<sup>113</sup> However, the Reverend Francis Willis had a different view of the matter and felt that the king would regain full composure and awareness.<sup>114</sup> As a result of these sharply divided views, the opposition, which supported the appointment of a regent, and the ministry, which opposed this step, each “acquired a medical champion.”<sup>115</sup> During the crisis, accusations were made about physicians distorting information based on their political allegiances, although more recent scholarship has speculated that the variety of medical opinions can be “accounted for by the complexity of the case and that their

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<sup>112</sup> Charles Trench, “The Royal Malady: Some Aspects of the Regency Crisis 1788-9,” *History Today* 12, no. 6 (June 1962): 386.

<sup>113</sup> Richard Plantagenet Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Greville, ed., *Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George III* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853), 2:19.

<sup>114</sup> “Report from the Committee Appointed to Examine the Physicians who have Attended his Majesty, during his Illness, Touching the State of his Majesty’s Health,” *Journals of the House of Commons*, 44 (1803): 8.

<sup>115</sup> Trench, 386.

rivalries were professional ... it was the politicians who made the most of them [the physicians' divided opinions] for their own purposes.”<sup>116</sup> As we will see, such a view is invalid when the full scope of primary sources is considered.

Politics and party retained their importance during the reign of King George III, as did physicians serving as courtiers. While there were some medical specialists under Queen Anne who failed to uphold their oath, it appears that it was worse with Farmer George's attendants. The approach taken by the Willis doctors when treating the king's illness hurt his physical body and dignity, but the courtier's oath made no allowances for a monarch who appeared insane. Their methods involved being forceful with the king and placing him in a strait waistcoat to help control his behavior, a process supported by the other physicians who had also restrained the king.<sup>117</sup> These procedures have been described as a, “new system of government of the King by intimidation, coercion, and restraint” which resulted in turbulence, “provoked by the repressive and punitive methods by which he was ruled.”<sup>118</sup> This forceful handling understandably aroused resentment and outrage in George III. He was known to argue against the measures instituted by the physicians, attack their characters, and attempted to physically confront Francis Willis on

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<sup>116</sup> Macalpine and Hunter, “Clinical Reassessment,” 172.

<sup>117</sup> The closest precedent for dealing with royal insanity was Henry VI from 1453 to 1455, but only two eye-witness accounts of his illness existed. For more on this see Bertram Wolffe, *Henry VI*, new ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 272-3 and 283. Henry VI's condition was different than George III's in that Henry, “had no sense of time or memory, almost no control over his limbs, could not stand upright or walk or indeed move unaided from the place he was seated.” Henry was watched day and night by his grooms and the pages of his chamber and his medical staff consisted of “two master physicians, John Fauceby and William Hatclyff, three yeomen assistants and a sergeant surgeon, a yeoman and a groom....”

<sup>118</sup> Macalpine and Hunter, *Mad-Business*, 54.

at least one occasion.<sup>119</sup> Yet, it was not only in the initial treatment of the king that physicians acted against his wishes. At one point, the medical men recognized that it would be easier to treat the king if they moved him to the royal residence at Kew. However, the monarch did not want to leave Windsor. As a result, his doctors secretly decided that they would lie to George III about the queen and princesses, in an effort to trick him into moving to the other palace.<sup>120</sup>

Besides lying to the king about the move to Kew, there were a number of other instances when attending doctors failed to live up to their oaths as good courtiers. Even though Baker was the first physician in ordinary, he recognized that he was in over his head when the king first started to show signs of mental illness. One example of this recognition was when, at the end of October 1788, Baker left the king “very ill, and in a state bordering upon delirium.” The next day he was scolded by Lady Courtown: “Good God, Sir George, if you thought the King so ill, how could you leave him?”<sup>121</sup> As a result, Baker called on Warren, who was the leading physician of the time and was known for his wide clientage base in and around London.<sup>122</sup> While his renown was respected by many, there was a conflict of interest which the monarch was quick to point out: ““You

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<sup>119</sup> Greville, 119-120.

<sup>120</sup> Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Greville, 2:22.

<sup>121</sup> E.W. Harcourt, ed., “Memoirs of the Years 1788-9. By Elizabeth, Countess Harcourt,” in *The Harcourt Papers* (Oxford: Parker, 1880), 4:12-13. Also see Fanny Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madame D’Arblay*, ed. Charlotte Barrett (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), 4:290-292. Fanny Burney also comments on Baker, noting that he felt “unequal to the whole toil” and that whenever she asked him a question about the king’s health, he “referred to Dr. Warren.”

<sup>122</sup> According to D’A. Power, “Warren, Richard (1731–1797),” rev. Catherine Bergin, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28788> (accessed March 5, 2014), Warren’s status and prestige helped his practice to the point that he was believed to make £9,000 a year.

[Warren] may come here as an acquaintance, but not as *my* physician; no man can serve two masters; you are the Prince of Wales's physician, you cannot be mine.'"<sup>123</sup> There was a clear tension of loyalties, especially knowing that if Warren and the other physicians decided that the king would not regain his mental faculties, the Prince of Wales would become regent.

Warren's rival, Reverend Francis Willis, had his own patron to consider – the queen. Willis, with Charlotte's assistance, eventually gained nearly complete control over the king's person and the ability to determine who could see George III.<sup>124</sup> This allowed Willis to have powers similar to Arbuthnot, in that he could limit the attendance of hostile individuals.<sup>125</sup> However, there was a significant shift in the ways that medical information was conveyed by the late eighteenth century. In 1714, Sir John Shadwell had pointed out to the Hanoverian successors that he had specifically taken his knowledge of the queen's health and presented information before the Lords of the Council. This implies that other physicians did not do the same thing. While the Privy Council may have heard from the physicians, Parliament did not demand any report from these doctors, even in a politically unstable period. While Anne occupied the throne, there was no open discussion of her health issues with Parliament or the wider public. This was not the case with George III. Between December 1788 and February 1789, not only were the

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<sup>123</sup> Harcourt, 27-8.

<sup>124</sup> For an example of Queen Charlotte giving this power to Willis and her hatred of Warren's manipulation of health reports for political means, see British Library, Egerton MS 2232, f. 1. Also see "Diary of John Willis During George III's Illness 1788-1789," Willis Papers, Volume II, British Library, Add MS 41691, f. 120-1.

<sup>125</sup> Hamilton, 60. Arbuthnot ordered a similar approach for Anne's physicians, who only came one at a time, and only on their assigned days.

king's physicians examined by the Privy Council, but they were also called before two separate committees in the Commons and one in the Lords to provide their opinions on George III's health and chance of recovery.<sup>126</sup> Interestingly, there was only minimal discussion about whether or not the doctors should be questioned. The Marquess of Stafford suggested that it would be better for the examination to take place in front of a committee, rather than the entire House.<sup>127</sup> The Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, agreed that the examination needed to be done cautiously, but he also concluded that the political situation and the issue of the regency required an accurate assessment of the monarch's prognosis.<sup>128</sup> When the examination did occur, none of the doctors expressed any reservations about sharing the king's private medical details in a public forum.

The committee in the Commons was a formal public government process to accumulate information about the monarch's health – an act without equal during Anne's reign. It also differed from the examination before the Privy Council, where only a specific list of questions was asked. With the MPs, any question could be asked of the doctors. This was more exposure and openness on the topic than in earlier reigns. Why this difference? For starters, there are more records of medical communications between the court doctors and high ranking government officials under George III than under

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<sup>126</sup> "Report from the Committee Appointed to Examine the Physicians who have Attended his Majesty," 6.

<sup>127</sup> William Cobbett, ed., *The Parliamentary History of England: From the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, vol. 27 (London: R. Bagshaw, 1814), c.657.

<sup>128</sup> *The Parliamentary Register; or, History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons [and House of Lords] ... During the ... Fifteenth [-Seventeenth] Parliament of Great Britain ... October 1780 [-1795/6]* (London: J Debrett, 1791), 25:3.

Anne or either of the first two Georges.<sup>129</sup> This may be the result of more physicians attending the king during his illness, that the records of this later period have merely survived the destruction of time, or that there was a change in the way that the monarch's health was perceived. While the first two points may also be true, the third is recognized in a message from the Lord Chancellor to the Prince of Wales. In a letter of December 3, 1788, Lord Thurlow wrote, "I have represented to her majesty that the Royal person is just as much under private care in this tedious disorder as it would be in a fever till the Legislature thinks fit to provide otherwise."<sup>130</sup> In earlier days, such a distinction of private care was not the legislature's to make. This letter, coupled with the fact that a special committee in the House of Commons recorded and published the findings of the doctors attending the monarch, shows that there had been a significant change in the way that the gatekeepers of information disseminated their knowledge.

While the House of Commons' records are not entirely clear about all the medical difficulties facing George III, they still demonstrate the different views held by the doctors relating to the king's illness and the political situation surrounding the regency.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> For one of many examples, see J.H. Rose, *William Pitt and National Revival* (London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd, 1915), 410. Also see: "Diary of John Willis During George III's Illness 1788-1789," Willis Papers, Volume II, British Library, Add MS 41691, f. 60-61; "Letters Relating to Illnesses of George III in 1789 and 1811," Royal College of Physicians, London, MS 3011/1-45; Aspinall, 1:409.

<sup>130</sup> Aspinall, 1:404.

<sup>131</sup> Furdell, *Royal Doctors*, 245. The doctors who attended Anne during her reign also disagreed on treatments. For instance, one time when the queen's pallor appeared worrisome, Arbuthnot ordered "that her head be shaved and blisters applied; [while] Dr. Sloan advised that Anne be bled." Also see "Copies of Letters from Dr J. Smith to the Duke and Duchess of Shrewsbury, Relating to the Last Illness of Queen Anne, 30 Dec. 1713-25 March 1714," Miscellaneous Papers, Society of Antiquaries of London, SAL/MS/206 f. 55-8. To see the extent of the party divide during the reign of George III, see the opposition's version of the Report of the Physicians' Examination Before the House of Commons Committee. The goal of *Important Facts and Opinions Relative to the King; Faithfully Collected from the Examination of the Royal Physicians, And Clearly Arranged Under General Heads* (London, 1788), 43, 55,

Yet, this account could be deceiving, as few of the physicians took a strong stance on the king's health before Parliament. All agreed that he was incapable of attending the legislature or conducting business, but two physicians took stronger stances on the convalescence of the king. Warren said that he saw no signs of recovery, while Willis expressed optimism that George was gradually returning to health.<sup>132</sup> The other physicians remained more neutral. It was the two vocal men who became the flag bearers for the competing political factions and created "Great Wars ... among the medical Tribe."<sup>133</sup> However, there were more than just differences in the backgrounds and experiences of the doctors that affected their testimony. At the time they were making their reports before the committee, "rapid changes in the king's physical and mental state began the clash of opinion between the royal physicians which did so much to prolong the suspense and uncertainty of the political crisis which was looming."<sup>134</sup>

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61 was to discredit the testimony of Willis, as seen by headings labeled, "Rash Experiments and Negligence of Dr. Willis," "Facts Illustrative of Dr. Willis's Credibility," and "Dr. Willis's Contradictions of Himself, and His Own Letter."

<sup>132</sup> "Report from the Committee Appointed to Examine the Physicians who have Attended his Majesty," 8.

<sup>133</sup> William LeFanu, ed., *Betsy Sheridan's Journal: Letters from Sheridan's Sister 1784-1786 and 1788-1790* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1960), 139.

<sup>134</sup> Macalpine and Hunter, *Mad-Business*, 36.





Figure 10. “Blue and Buf Loyalty.” Print by Thomas Rowlandson. Published by S.W. Fores. December 31, 1788. In this print, which describes how quickly accounts changed regarding the health of George III and the hostility felt by the Whigs towards the physicians who thought the king would recover, Richard Brinsley Sheridan is dressed in blue and the Reverend Francis Willis dressed in brown. The right side of the print is labeled ‘Saturday’ and the left side is labeled ‘Sunday.’ An anonymous inquirer asks Willis, “Doctor, how is your Patient to Day.” On Saturday Willis responds, “Rather worse-Sir” to which Sheridan smirks and states, “Ha – ha – rare news.” On Sunday the same question is asked of Willis and he answers “Better thank God” to which Sheridan sneers and yells “Damnation.” BM Satires 7394.

While the rapid changes in the monarch’s health were problematic in creating a consensus about the prognosis of the king, there was another concern that the physicians had to accommodate for – printed reports. As Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter noted, the doctors “had to consider the feelings of the queen and her family and to bear in mind that the King himself was likely to see their reports in the papers – if not at the time then surely if he recovered.”<sup>135</sup> These were issues Anne’s physicians did not have to address. All the same, to those members of the public reading the published accounts “...the Reports of the Physicians are extremely repugnant to each other, Willis standing against

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 38-9. This concern proved true. Harcourt, 264 includes a passage where Lady Elizabeth Harcourt recounts: “The King was more than ever displeased with the physicians after reading the account of their examination by the Committee....”

Warren & his Associates, and both abusing and condemning the other. In all probability it will be a very curious Report, with a deal of strange matter in it....”<sup>136</sup> The politics of the physicians were clear not only in the published reports of their examinations, which went through five editions in the space of a few months, but also in the newspapers.

The inclusion of these official reports in print is significant because it reflects a whole new dimension of the role that physicians played in providing medical information. While the prime minister, members of Parliament, and the general public gained access to the opinions and thoughts of the doctors, what they said was not always clear. By the end of October 1788, Edmund Burke complained there had been too much secrecy surrounding the king’s health since June, and that he could not get to the bottom of it all.<sup>137</sup> Burke was not alone in this belief, a point to which I will return shortly. At the same time as members of Parliament complained about the scope of the medical information, the press provided more in-depth coverage about the health situation of the king than ever before. For instance, after an early bout of illness at Windsor, a report in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* stated that, “His Majesty was so well recovered of his late indisposition ... His Majesty’s disorder originated from a cold ... This produced a rheumatic pain in his stomach, which tow [*sic*] or three glasses of Madeira wine threw into his extremities.”<sup>138</sup> This is a significantly more-detailed medical account than the stories in the papers about Anne, which simply stated that it was nice to see a healthy

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<sup>136</sup> Bland Burges Papers, James Bland Burges to Anne Bland Burges, January 9, 1789, Dept. 8 Bland Burges, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, f. 147r.

<sup>137</sup> Gilbert Elliot, *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot First Earl of Minto from 1751-1806*, ed. The Countess of Minto (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874), 1:225-6.

<sup>138</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 58 (1788): 2:928.

queen or vaguely referred to her as indisposed.<sup>139</sup> While the press provided the populace with unverified accounts of the king's health, the daily bulletins written by the physicians and read publically each day at St. James's, were vague and as unreliable as the reports in the newspapers.

Even though print culture had grown in scale and Parliament had solidified its position of authority since the Revolution of 1688, at this critical moment in 1788, Edmund Burke recognized that "the Physicians, whose report is to settle the State ... are now the men in power."<sup>140</sup> As a result, the doctors controlled the story by releasing their views of the situation and were still the gatekeepers of important information, although their position was weakened since they could not all agree on a prognosis or even what the king's symptoms meant. One particular instance shows how far apart the public "truth" was from the actual medical reality. On December 24, 1788, Sir George Baker and Dr. Reynolds attended to the king, who was removed from the waistcoat, suffered from severely sore blisters, sweat throughout the evening, and slept little. The public bulletin that went out simply stated that, "His Majesty passed the night quietly, but with little sleep, and is quiet this morning."<sup>141</sup> The public was hardly getting the full story.

As we saw before with Edmund Burke, the topic of inadequate and incomplete accounts was a frequent complaint at the time. Individuals connected to the court, and

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<sup>139</sup> *Flying Post or The Post Master*, April 23-25, 1702, Issue 1087 and *British Mercury*, February 10-17, 1714, Issue 450.

<sup>140</sup> Edmund Burke, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Holden Furber (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 5:428.

<sup>141</sup> *General Evening Post*, December 23-25, 1788, Issue 8599 and Greville, 132-3. The next day Greville recorded in his diary that he had, "proofs too strong, that things were not now always explained as they happened, & that a turn was given how these were to be thought of." Also see "Diary of John Willis During George III's Illness 1788-1789," Willis Papers, Volume II, British Library, Add MS 41691, f. 35-9.

those with no connection, bemoaned how little information was provided about the king's health and questioned the relationship of what was reported in the newspapers and whispered in the streets with reality. Dr. John Willis felt that too many negative statements appeared in the public sphere about George III's health. John's stance on this subject continued to increase as time and again, he heard how Warren treated his father, the Reverend Francis Willis, in private and the way Warren challenged the reverend's opinions in public. In January 1789, before the second examination of the physicians before the Commons' committee, John Willis complained to the Lord Chancellor that Warren only told people bad accounts of George III's health, which were based on seeing the king but for a few minutes. Willis' diary entry recounts Thurlow's response, noting he

d---d the other physicians; they must ever be held[,] said he[,] in contemptible estimation for their opinions before the two houses of Parliament; that we [John Willis and his father] stood high in the opinion of the world. Let them [the other physicians] sign to what they pleased in the Bulletin; if it be not your opinions, say this, 'This account D<sup>r</sup>. Warren from 15 minutes conversation believes to be true, therefore he is right in signing it; from 24 hours conversation I believe it to be false, therefore I ought not to sign it.' These words the Chancellor wrote down. He said also we might report their account to be false to those who had any right to inquire.<sup>142</sup>

Rather than exemplifying the spirit of medical ethics and professional camaraderie espoused by John Gregory's treatise, this letter shows the tensions that remained among the physicians and how the politicians reinforced the doctors' differences of opinion. Other times though, reports went out without the coaching of politicians. In one such case, Fanny Burney, the famed author who was also part of Queen Charlotte's household,

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<sup>142</sup> "Diary of John Willis During George III's Illness 1788-1789," Willis Papers, Volume II, British Library, Add MS 41691, f. 64r. This certainly sounds like Thurlow coaching John Willis on what to say before the upcoming examination in the Commons.

describes the only bulletin that John Willis ever signed. On January 25, he wrote a positive description of the king, noting, “His Majesty has passed a very good night, and is perfectly composed and collected this morning.”<sup>143</sup> The rest of the passage in Fanny Burney’s diary illustrates how influential the comments of doctors could be, even if their obligations as courtiers were to minimize the sharing of information. Burney notes that the bulletin was given to Mr. Smelt, the master of Kew House, and that, taking it he “went and gladdened the hearts of every good subject of his acquaintance in town.”<sup>144</sup>

### **The Ideal Courtier**

The two Willis physicians were known to be overly optimistic in the assessments they sent outside the walls of Kew. Dr. Warren was known to spread bad accounts of the king’s health, not allowing any amendment to be made in his condition if he uttered one nonsensical word a day. Yet, not everyone shared the same desire to spread information to the public. An equerry to the king, Colonel Robert Greville, saw all the dangers that could develop if the reports of George III’s health were too optimistic too soon. He did not believe that issuing blatant falsehoods would improve the situation, but he wished the physicians would be more cautious in what they told their friends and the public. His gripes with the arrangements at Kew, as expressed in his diary, were many and his opinion is of value, as by any definition he embodied the ideal courtier. First, he respected and valued the king above all else. His diary provides the most intimate account of what transpired from a courtier’s perspective from fall 1788 through spring 1789, and includes a discussion of numerous unpleasant incidents involving the king’s

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<sup>143</sup> Burney, 4:389.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

anger, violence, obsession with Lady Pembroke, and even his restraint by the strait waistcoat. Greville never planned to publish the diary. Still, he recognized that though “it is painful to mark such details, but the real state of His Majesty’s Mind, from time to time, is an object of so much interest & importance, that the progressive circumstances connected with it cannot be withheld [*sic*] in fair narration, where continued memorandums refer to daily occurrences.”<sup>145</sup> This recognition made Greville hostile toward the physicians and their many failings, including how they phrased their public bulletins. He frequently commented in his diary that they failed to be properly firm in managing the king and that once Willis was put in charge of George III’s care, the reverend had too much power.<sup>146</sup> When other physicians were in attendance and wanted to see the king, Willis would prevent them. On January 28, 1789, Greville recorded, “I felt much surprised at the appearance of so much mystery, nor can I reconcile (myself) to the measure of keeping The Physicians, so much as is done, from the opportunity of making their personal observations.”<sup>147</sup> Willis had the support of the queen, the Lord Chancellor, and held too much sway, in the eyes of Greville, inside the halls of Kew Palace.

Not every court servant remained as devoted to quiet and private observation as Greville did during the long ordeal. Leaks occurred, just like in every other reign, despite the measures taken to try to keep people from carrying rumored intelligence to the

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<sup>145</sup> Greville, 161.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 102 and 132-3.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 197.

public.<sup>148</sup> One gets the sense of frustration Greville felt whenever these leaks were attributed to the king's courtiers. On February 10, as he rode into town, Greville heard rumors about the sovereign's recovery "& found the joyous tidings were spreading fast in every quarter, & many were ready to think the recovery compleat & among the flying reports of the day in Town, I was told that a Brother Equerry of Mine had said that The King was actually well enough to proclaim Himself fit to govern again tomorrow!"<sup>149</sup> Although Greville might have been frustrated, he could have hardly been surprised to hear such reports as they were constantly emitting from Kew. Almost a month before, Sir Joseph Banks, the famed botanist, had been visiting Kew and overhearing a health report from one of the pages of the backstairs,

went away rejoiced at this good news, & it spread rapidly on the road-He met & communicated it to Lord Hopetown who meeting M<sup>r</sup> Dundas congratulated Him on the good news from Kew, which He said he had just heard from Sir Joseph Banks, & who received it from D<sup>r</sup> Willis. This M<sup>r</sup> Dundas on his arrival to his attendance communicated to us. Thus fly our histories from hence & thus are they dispersed.<sup>150</sup>

All the while, the physicians' bulletins continued to go out, sometimes pairing well with the private accounts carried out by people like Sir Joseph, and other times in complete contrast, which left the public dissatisfied and confused.

This dissatisfaction was visible in the newspaper editorials of the day which blasted the king's physicians, not only for their political biases, but also for how they

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<sup>148</sup> Burney, 4:304 and 4:307 describe how Windsor was locked down after the Prince of Wales' arrival on November 8, 1788. Burney, 4:350 and 4:394 describe the similar arrangements set up at Kew that limited access to the house.

<sup>149</sup> Greville, 216. In fact, it would be almost another month before George III was ready to regain the executive function of government powers.

<sup>150</sup> Greville, 173.

concealed the state of George III's constitution. As we saw with Queen Anne's health, other household officers realized that individuals like Arbuthnot were downplaying and outright concealing her bouts of illness. The same was true under the third Hanoverian, but the difference was that rather than courtiers complaining about it in private correspondence, journalists expressed their outrage in the flourishing print culture and demanded more accountability. While George's physicians may have been trying to adhere to their duties as courtiers, political rancor and party loyalty seem to have trumped any other consideration. In the eyes of one writer for the *Whitehall Evening Post*, "We shall leave that province [explaining the king's illness] in the hands of the Physical Gentlemen, to divulge as much as they think proper under the controul [*sic*] of Ministers of State; although we think all their secrecy is good for nothing."<sup>151</sup> Although that passage from the *Whitehall Evening Post* ultimately left the decision about reporting on the king's health to his physicians and Cabinet officials, not all publications were as considerate. Letters appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* from a correspondent complaining that, based on what the public had learned of the king's illness, the physicians were treating George III for the wrong disease. At least one editor defended the physicians, following the correspondent's rant with, "but surely, when the high reputation, and acknowledged skill of the physicians, who have administered their aid to the Royal patient are considered, the conjecture they may have mistaken his Majesty's case is not very probable."<sup>152</sup> However, the response to this disclaimer undoubtedly

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<sup>151</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, November 6-8, 1788, Issue 6465.

<sup>152</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, November 15, 1788, Issue 6099.



echoed the thoughts of more than just one citizen, and centered its complaint on concealing the truth, rather than splitting hairs over different diagnoses:

A laconic style is peculiar to the faculty: but, is not the mysterious precision with which the consulting Physicians daily communicate the state of his Majesty's complaint highly disrespectful to the understanding and feelings of a spirited nation, whose great loyalty, and unparalleled attachment to their afflicted Sovereign makes them extremely solicitous to know the true state of his Majesty's mind, and the prospect of recovery. The truth is mysteriously concealed from an affectionate publick, by the incomprehensible brevity of the faculty: A brevity which some affect to call medical sagacity, but which I term a want of respect to the community at large.<sup>153</sup>

By the end of November 1788, many members of the public were upset with the doctors and how much information they were concealing, a complaint which continued through the spring of 1789. The hostility was so intense that the physicians even feared for their lives, Sir George Baker having once been attacked by a mob in the street.<sup>154</sup>

Perhaps from hearing this type of complaint from others, or just seeing people's reactions on his own visits to town, the ever vigilant courtier Greville recognized the dangers associated with addressing the arguments raised by the newspaper correspondent. Not only were too negative or secretive reports of George III's health a problem, but swinging in the opposite direction and providing reports that were overly optimistic could be equally dangerous. Greville joined in with the public on blaming the physicians, in his case the father and son Willis, and Sir Lucas Pepys, those doctors who from the very beginning said the king would recover. Greville thought their rosy accounts were unfair to both the king and his family since, "to raise false hopes by such means of his case, may

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<sup>153</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, November 29 1788, Issue 6103.

<sup>154</sup> Burney, 4:336-7.

at some future time greatly depress the expectations of many, who while they bewailed this awful [*sic*] dispensation of providence, would have waited with patient hope for his recovery.”<sup>155</sup> Despite all the up and down reports, the king ultimately recovered and his subjects rejoiced. In the end, one is again reminded what honor Greville took in his silence throughout the ordeal, thus maintaining his oath and loyalty to his monarch.<sup>156</sup> After the public bulletins ceased and the Regency Crisis ended, Greville observed, during the whole of the affair, “the Information I possess’d might have been usefully extended to some few.... Mr. Pitt in all his visits here never once enquired for Me, nor did He ask information from Me, but not unfrequently [*sic*] He returned from hence with details less accurate, that those which plainer matter of fact, within his ready reach, might have afforded Him.”<sup>157</sup> Not all of those at court could say with such satisfaction that they had remained silent.

### **The Petulant Page**

One individual who freely shared his knowledge of the king’s health with those at Kew and in the wider world was a man named George Ernst, a page of the backstairs. If

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<sup>155</sup> Greville, 128.

<sup>156</sup> There were other courtiers who stayed silent, but were attacked by the public. One example can be seen in a letter published by the *Whitehall Evening Post* of October 30-November 1, 1788, Issue 6462: “Courtiers ... [were] keeping profound secrets what every British subject has a right to be intimately acquainted with.” According to Elliot, i:239-40, Sir Gilbert Elliot believed that the Prince of Wales’ taking charge of Windsor prevented “the attempts at imposition and concealment with respect to the King’s situation which would probably have been practised if the courtiers had been left to themselves.” Other courtiers talked, but in a way to help defend the king. According to Georgiana Cavendish, “Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire’s Diary (November 20, 1788-January 12, 1789,” in *Sheridan: From New and Original Material*, ed. Walter Sichel (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1909), 2:403, The Duchess of Devonshire, in speaking about the king’s illness, wrote: “The Courtiers all affect to have been mad—Lord Fauconberg declares all the world saw him in a strait waistcoat and L<sup>d</sup> Salisbury says the King has as much sense as he has.”

<sup>157</sup> Greville, 260.

Greville was the ideal courtier worthy of appearing on the cover of Baldassare Castiglione's famed work, *The Book of the Courtier*, Ernst would appear on the title page for something much more sinister. The story of Ernst is complicated and pieced together from fragmentary sources.<sup>158</sup> He was appointed to his position as a page in 1767. He initially made £100 per annum and served with five other pages of the backstairs. All of them received a salary bump to £200 per annum starting in 1782.<sup>159</sup> According to a variety of sources, Ernst's father was also a page to George III and died when Ernst was still young.<sup>160</sup> The king specifically held open a spot as a page until Ernst was old enough to fill the vacancy, which he did at a young age. Some indications are that he also spent time at the University of Göttingen, although in what capacity is unclear.<sup>161</sup> Additionally, Ernst had a sister and a mother to whom he was quite devoted, and it appears he also had a wife and daughter.

Numerous diaries and historic accounts of this period refer to Ernst by name, but also reference the other pages as a source of trouble and leaked information.<sup>162</sup> Ernst was with the king from the very beginning of his illness, joining the family while they took

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<sup>158</sup> Part of the confusion comes from the fact that there was a Frederick Ernest employed as a page of the backstairs from 1760 until 1766. Additionally, the spelling of Ernst's name, also appearing as Ernest, leads to complications in determining if an author or diarist is referring to Ernst, the page, or someone else with the German name who could have been at court, such as Ernst Gieswell, who became a page after 1788 but visited court before his appointment.

<sup>159</sup> "Lord Chamberlain 1660-1837," in *The Database of Court Officers*, ed. Robert Bucholz, <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/CHAMBER1.list.pdf> (accessed June 14, 2014).

<sup>160</sup> William Massey, *A History of England During the Reign of George the Third*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1865), 3:207 and Harcourt, 137.

<sup>161</sup> Vernon Delves Broughton, ed., *Court and Private Life in the Time of Queen Charlotte: Being the Journals of Mrs Papendiek, Assistant Keeper of the Wardrobe and Reader to Her Majesty* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1887), 1:160.

<sup>162</sup> Harcourt, 29, 174, 197, and Greville, 157.

the waters at Cheltenham during the summer of 1788. The problem with Ernst and the other pages was two-fold. The first issue was that they had to spend all their time around a man who had lost his sense of propriety and was mentally unsound. The pages not only heard the inappropriate comments the king made about Lady Pembroke, but in these periods of passion, they were the ones responsible for calming the king, which included holding him down in bed and placing him in the strait waistcoat. As a result of their actions and the king's strong repugnance to the pages, they were frequently subject to physical and verbal abuse. Greville notes numerous such instances. Pages were sometimes punched, had their wigs burned, had chairs thrown at them, and were cut in the face by the king.<sup>163</sup> Regardless of the monarch's actions towards the pages and attendants, they had to keep the king in check. These were scenarios for which no courtier was prepared.

In an age when physicians were reluctant to physically examine a monarch, because it involved touching the royal body, the pages found themselves in an impossible situation, grasping for stability.<sup>164</sup> Although there may have been truth to the story shared by Lord Sydney, that the king "in a paroxysm ... had hurt one of the Pages *extremely*," some rumors became fish tales, ever increasing in size until they reached the level

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<sup>163</sup> Greville, 114, 117, 175, 198-9 and "Diary of John Willis During George III's Illness 1788-1789," Willis Papers, Volume II, British Library, Add MS 41691, 123r.

<sup>164</sup> In normal times, bedchamber officials touched the royal body for dressing and shaving, part of "the royal body service." Hesitations to physically examining a patient's body can be found in Dorothy Porter and Roy Porter, *Patient's Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 75, 80-1. In relation to George III, according to Macalpine and Hunter, *Mad Business*, xiii-xiv, even during the king's illness of 1812, his physicians only examined his body visually, not physically.

appearing in William Massey's *History of England*.<sup>165</sup> Massey not only identified Ernst as the page who, in one instance struck the king, but that "on one occasion, when His majesty wished to protract his exercise in the gardens at Kew, Ernst seized him in his arms, carried him into a chamber, and throwing him violent on a sofa, exclaimed in an insolent manner to the attendants: 'There is your King for you.'"<sup>166</sup> It is unimaginable that such actions could have occurred without Ernst being immediately dismissed or imprisoned for such grossly insubordinate and improper actions. Newspapers related a different reason for why Ernst developed a certain level of notoriety. The *General Evening Post* of January 6-8, 1789 reported:

Dr. Willis and Mr. Ernest, his Majesty's favourite page, have had an unlucky difference, which has terminated rather unfortunately for the latter, who is now not suffered to approach his Royal master, to whom he has been for many years particularly attached. The cause of Dr. Willis's dislike to Mr. Ernest, it is said, was, that the latter often looked too attentively at his Majesty, which prevented the effect of Dr. Willis's eye, upon which it is understood the Doctor chiefly depends. The situation of Mr. Ernest is to be lamented, as his fault was only the anxious eagerness of a faithful servant.<sup>167</sup>

Despite the glowing report of Ernst's conduct, rumors of the pages abusing the king continued, in part because there was a basis of truth to the claims.

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<sup>165</sup> Oscar Browning, ed., *The Political Memoranda of Francis Fifth Duke of Leeds, Now First Printed From the Originals in the British Museum* (Westminster: Nichols and Sons, 1884), 126.

<sup>166</sup> Massey, 3:208.

<sup>167</sup> *General Evening Post*, January 6-8, 1789, Issue 8605. Although not necessarily in this report, because Ernst comes off looking like a faithful courtier, he had a problem with Reverend Francis Willis. According to "Diary of John Willis During George III's Illness 1788-1789," Willis Papers, Volume II, British Library, Add MS 41691, f. 68r, Ernst once confronted Francis Willis, claiming that he knew the doctor was spreading lies about him to the queen and public and that Willis misrepresented the king's actual health to the public.

As a result of all the time spent with the king, it soon became clear to those at Kew that the pages had grown too familiar with George III. On January 4, 1789, two days before the above-noted report in the *General Evening Post*, Greville heard from Francis Willis about “the behaviour of one of His Majesty’s pages (Ernst) which He had thought had been exceedingly improper both to The King & to Himself. That his manner to The King was too rude & threatening, & improper to be used to anybody in that situation, & that the King seemed to stand peculiarly in awe of Him from that treatment.”<sup>168</sup> Lady Elizabeth Harcourt, another witness inside of Kew Palace, reported “Ernest not only sat down in the room with the King with his hat on, but told Willis he did many things out of *charity*. Willis advised him to substitute the word *gratitude*, but I fancy that is one he does not understand the meaning of.”<sup>169</sup> She went on to report that this response was even worse since the king had “treated him [Ernst] with the greatest kindness” since he was a child.<sup>170</sup>

Although Ernst was one of the only pages mentioned by name in the accounts of the witnesses at court, other pages also failed to uphold their courtier oaths, which helps explain the rumors about the poor treatment George III experienced, that floated outside the walls of Kew and made their way into London. In one such account, Lord Sydney reported to members of the Privy Council that “the K. had actually been struck by one of his Pages, and with great agitation said it was impossible such treatment could be

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<sup>168</sup> Greville, 153.

<sup>169</sup> Harcourt, 137.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

suffered, as the King had not only been shamefully treated but actually betrayed.”<sup>171</sup>

While people were not quoting codes of conduct or oaths, it was clear the behavior of the pages was lacking.

In the midst of all the violence, rumor, and confusion at Kew, the pages were receiving mixed messages from the king.<sup>172</sup> On November 25, the king violently struck a page but only a few minutes later, took him by the hand and “asked his Pardon twenty times.”<sup>173</sup> On December 3, George III asked to go on a walk and mentioned that his preference would be for Greville to accompany him. Although the walk was canceled, the king later admitted he planned to distract everyone by blinding Greville with “Arquesbusade Water,” a lotion for treating wounds, and make his escape from the palace grounds.<sup>174</sup> At other times, such as January 1, 1789, the monarch would praise one of the pages as his favorite, usually Robert Brawn, and then just as quickly begin striking

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<sup>171</sup> Browning, 126.

<sup>172</sup> The pages also received mixed messages about whose instructions to follow. Although they should have been subordinate to Thomas Thynne, 1st Marques of Bath, and Groom of the Stole, he is not mentioned as a visitor to Kew in any of the courtiers’ diaries. In his absence, the pages were unsure who to obey. For instance, according to Greville, 154, on January 4, after Rev. Francis Willis complained to Greville about Ernst’s behavior, he asked the equerry to “use My Authority” to address the problem. Greville responded that his “Situation as Equerry to His Majesty was very limited as to its powers, & that I had made it a constant rule, never to exceed them. I stated that I had no authority at all out of the Stable Department & none at any time over His Majesty’s Pages.” This confusion was not resolved until January 28, 1789 when the queen desired Greville to, “inform the Pages from Her, that they were not to go into The King’s Apartment without directions either from Doctor Willis or Doctor John Willis.... They all seemed glad to receive explicit commands from The Queen & expressed their willingness to obey Them—Previous to this, some of the Pages had not thought Themselves authorized to obey a Verbal direction from Dr. Willis alone....” Quotation is from Greville, 195. For a description of the letter sent by the two Willis physicians to convince the queen to give them this control, see “Diary of John Willis During George III’s Illness 1788-1789,” Willis Papers, Volume II, British Library, Add MS 41691, f. 114r-121r.

<sup>173</sup> Greville, 104.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

a page caught unaware.<sup>175</sup> Such was the nature of the king's malady. In one case, a man named Spicer, who was an attendant from the Willis' asylum doing the same work as the pages, received a note from George III stating that he would pay Spicer £50 a year for his life and after his death an annuity to his wife and daughter. Greville notes that "it was not uncustomary at this time for H.M.<sup>y</sup> to give these kinds of promisory [*sic*] Notes."<sup>176</sup>

People at court were left confused and concerned.

One thing was clear – that the pages possessed the most damning information about how the king behaved while suffering the worst treatment of any group of courtiers. As a result, they could not abide by the oath to not know anything hurtful or prejudicial toward the king, as everywhere they looked at Kew was a reminder of the extreme nature of his malady. However, some went beyond just knowing these details to actively spreading them. It is unclear how many pages spread rumors and reported on the real status of George III's health, but Ernst is almost always mentioned by name whenever such accusations occur. Accounts from both the ministry and opposition focus on the pages as a major source of leaked information. In early January 1789, the ministry-supporting Lady Harcourt received a letter from her mother-in-law. It read in part:

I heard the Duke [of Cumberland, a member of the opposition] give an account of the pages, and found Ernest the man they most depended on; he said he was their steady one, but that latterly his hand was so well known that he got another to direct his letters, unless he could give them unseen to *Warren*. He mentioned another they heard from, but I could not ask the name without exciting suspicion.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 147. The king was also known to praise and condemn his physicians in a similar manner. He disliked Warren because he served the Prince of Wales. He disliked Willis for abandoning religion to take up medicine. He liked Heberden because he did not lie. And he disliked Baker because he had lied to the king, even though, at his own admittance, it was a tiny lie.

<sup>176</sup> Greville, 157.



It was also reported that the opposition were stymied in information gathering at the end of January when the queen banned the pages from entering the king's presence without Willis' approval.<sup>178</sup> William Fawkener, clerk of the Privy Council, recognized that the curtailing of the pages' access to the king would limit the spread of rumors as, "it is certainly through them, at least in a great degree, that the many stories we have heard of their master[']s conversation, have reached the publick ear."<sup>179</sup> Limiting the pages' access to George III was only the first step. After the king's recovery in March 1789, the Lord Chancellor informed Greville of the king's decision that some pages were to be removed from their places, but keep their salaries for life. The removals were necessary since "the manner in which they [the pages] had been obliged to attend on Him during his illness, they had obtained a sort of familiarity, which now would not be pleasing to Him."<sup>180</sup> This is an understandable response on the part of George III and indeed, there were numerous "rats," including the Duke of Queensberry, the Marquess of Lothian, Lord Malmesbury, the Marquess of Hastings, and the Duke of Northumberland, that had betrayed or deserted the king who lost their positions and support in the months following the monarch's recovery. Such betrayals even became a talking point for the debating societies of London.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Harcourt, 121.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>179</sup> Liverpool Papers, Vol. XXXIV, William Fawkener to Lord Hawkesbury, December 6, 1788, British Library, Add MS 38223, f. 291r.

<sup>180</sup> Greville, 251 and 259.

Despite these dismissals and the king's recovery, George Ernst's story is just beginning. What remains unclear is what exactly happened with the dismissal of Ernst and the other pages.<sup>182</sup> Was Ernst one of the four pages that Sir Nathaniel Wraxall noted in his diary in early March 1789 who were dismissed for providing information to opposition members at Carlton House?<sup>183</sup> Was he dismissed in the first two months of 1789 or even December 1788 as Massey claims?<sup>184</sup> Or was the situation more as Charlotte Papendiek, the wife of one of the pages who attended George III, described in her diary? According to her account, admittedly written years after the fact, Ernst and some of the other pages were encouraged to retire from attendance on the king and live at St. James's with their salaries, but they balked upon learning there would be no extra compensation for the ordeal they had just been through with a violent and manic king<sup>185</sup>

The sources do not agree on enough of the story to make the truth clear. What is known with certainty is that in 1790, George Ernst began to contact his former associates of the backstairs. He wrote to Robert Brawn, the king's favorite, asking that he pass along a

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<sup>181</sup> *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, March 20, 1789, Issue 4985. Westminster Forum: "Did the conduct of certain Servants of the Sovereign (lately dismissed) indicate a disinterested Patriotism superior to private Obligations; or a time-serving Inclination to promote their own Interests?" For more on these dismissals see Charles Ross, ed., *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis* (London: John Murray, 1859), 1:406-7.

<sup>182</sup> Dismissal of the pages must have occurred, and outraged some, as seen by a report in the *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, March 20, 1789. Issue 4985: "The Royal Pages have been most cruelly slandered, as if the loss of their appointments was not deemed sufficiently severe, by the herd of ministerial scavengers. The only offence imputed to these gentlemen is, indiscreet *tattling*. That none of them have deserved such an imputation is confidently believed by all who know them.... [they suffer] for an offence, which most probably existed only in the imaginations of their vile traducers."

<sup>183</sup> N.W. Wraxall, *Posthumous Memoirs of His Own Time*, 2nd ed. (London: Richard Bentley, 1836), 3:362. Wraxall reports that two pages were German and two were English.

<sup>184</sup> Massey, 3:207-8.

<sup>185</sup> Broughton, 2: 90-1.

petition to George III.<sup>186</sup> Over the next two years, Ernst did not hear back from his former associate. In 1792 he again wrote to Brawn with the same petition. Both letters dealt with his widowed mother and sister. In the fall of 1789, George III had promised Ernst's mother and sister a pension of £200 per year. The only problem was that, like so many monarchs, George III was behind in his payments. Ernst also included his own address to the king, suggesting that rather than providing a pension, the monarch might appoint the Ernst women to the lucrative sinecures of housekeepers at St. James's.<sup>187</sup> Weeks went by with no response from Brawn or the king.

In a situation like this, a good courtier might bemoan the financial constraints of the sovereign or wonder what he had done to lose his favor. Ernst was not a good courtier. His letter to Brawn of September 11, 1792 made clear that he was not going to take matters lying down. Unless the king, or queen, came forward with the pension promised his mother, the former page threatened

that it is my positive determination to bring the Business of the Pages before the Public the ensuing Winter—Such impolitic, treacherous, & inhuman acts of oppression will be exhibited to the public view, as, I believe, never before disgraced the Annals of any other country in the World: for though Insanity might palliate, it can never be said to justify so barbarous a Conduct.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Papers of the Dundas Family of Melville; Letters and Papers on State and Public Affairs, "Documents relative to the threat by George Ernst, late one of the King's Pages, to make a public disclosure of events connected with the King's illness of 1788-9 and with his alleged unwarranted dismissal from the royal service, following upon the failure of Ernst's petitions to the King for a pension and compensation and for confirmation of a pension to Dorothy Ernst, his widowed mother," George Ernst to Robert Brawn, August 17, 1790, National Archives of Scotland, GD 51/1/14/2. Hereafter cited as NAS.

<sup>187</sup> George Ernst to King George III, August 21, 1792, NAS, GD 51/1/14/4.

<sup>188</sup> George Ernst to Robert Brawn, September 11, 1792, NAS, GD 51/1/14/5.

The ominous tone in this address finally earned Ernst a response, but it did not come from Brawn. Instead it came from Ernst Gieswell, a new page who had assisted during the king's illness.<sup>189</sup> Gieswell's treatment of the king had been so kind and considerate, that he afterwards was made a denizen of England, the same reward that Christopher Papendiek received for his service.<sup>190</sup> Clearly, these men were among the pages who had upheld their duties as courtiers. Gieswell, with an understanding of how a courtier should act, tried to persuade Ernst to avoid publication of such a scandalous account. Not only would it hurt his mother's chance of receiving a pension but Gieswell stressed to Ernst that if he wanted to receive any favor from the king, he should put aside anger and "write a Memorial as it should be written like a man of feeling [*sic*] and a Gentleman for such you will always be looked upon, when your Conduct agrees with it to his Sovereign and Kind Master and I dare say that you will sooner be comforted than by any other Method...."<sup>191</sup> These sane words fell upon deaf ears. The adage of Lord Chesterfield was proving itself true: "a slighted servant could do you more hurt at court, than ten men of merit can do you good."<sup>192</sup>

The situation escalated further in October 1792. Ernst changed tactics and his objective appears to have changed as well. Although in future petitions to the king and other members of the royal family Ernst still mentioned the pension due to his mother, he

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<sup>189</sup> Greville, 226.

<sup>190</sup> F. Anne M.R. Jarvis, "The Community of German Migrant Musicians in London c1750–c1850" (master's thesis, University of Cambridge, 2003), 1:28.

<sup>191</sup> Ernst Gieswell to George Ernst, September 16, 1792, NAS, GD 51/1/14/6.

<sup>192</sup> Lucy Worsley, *The Courtiers: Splendor and Intrigue in the Georgian Court at Kensington Palace* (New York: Walker & Co., 2010), 125.

switched his focus to the financial problems he experienced after his dutiful service to the king ended. Despite all the contradictory information, it appears that, at a minimum, Ernst received £80 per year until his death in 1801.<sup>193</sup> Yet, this was obviously less than he felt he deserved. He had strayed far from the ideal that a courtier should be focused on what his master desired, which in the case of George III had been his recovery from illness and putting the whole situation behind him. Instead, Ernst wanted to drag the situation back into the spotlight or get paid. This was blackmail pure and simple.<sup>194</sup> In a petition from the middle of October 1792, Ernst stated that he had “greatly impaired his Health, & even risked his life, by a long & painful attendance on your Royal Person throughout the whole of your Majesty’s alarming Indisposition....”<sup>195</sup> As a result, Ernst wrote that he should receive a onetime present of £1000 as a “Just and Reasonable compensation for the severe Loss he has sustained by his Dismission From your Majestys [*sic*] service.”<sup>196</sup> From Gieswell’s response to this petition, we learn that it was presented to the king who failed to grant it a reply. From the perspective of a page who was confused, at least according to his own writings, about why he had fallen from the monarch’s good graces, this silence was the final straw for Ernst. He realized that threatening to publish a tell-all book was extreme, yet he continued to advance this

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<sup>193</sup> *The Royal Kalendar: Or, Complete and Correct Annual Register for England, Scotland, Ireland, and America. For the Year 1799* (London: J. Debrett, 1799), 92.

<sup>194</sup> Although Sarah Duchess of Marlborough extorted money from Queen Anne with her threat of publishing the queen’s letters, there is nothing included in the collection of Ernst papers that draws a comparison between the two circumstances.

<sup>195</sup> George Ernst to King George III, October 16-17, 1792 [?], NAS, GD 51/1/14/11.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

option, even though it appears that he was stalling for time in the hopes the king might change his mind.

The petitions to George III continued through the end of the year. Along the way, Ernst's prime demand continued to be increasing the amount of money paid to him. Despite receiving £180 per annum in pension, according to Sir Evan Nepean, who served as both Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department and Under-Secretary of State for War, Ernst felt his pension should be roughly £600 per year, going so far as to send a breakdown of this sum to Nepean.<sup>197</sup> It is fortunate that both Nepean and Colonel Philip Goldsworthy, the king's chief equerry, did not have the final say in the matter. Both felt that Ernst's pension should be revoked immediately.<sup>198</sup> They also looked into the possibility that Ernst's letters were an "indictable offense," although no charges appear to have resulted from this investigation.<sup>199</sup> However, George III, showing more loyalty than might be expected, determined that despite Ernst's threats to publish, he should continue to receive his pension of £180 per annum, plus apartments at St. James's, coal, and table linens, all while his mother received an annuity of £100 per annum.<sup>200</sup> At no point did the king demand that Ernst be silenced.

Throughout the fall of 1792, Ernst had multiple meetings with both Nepean and Goldsworthy and was informed of the king's decision. Shockingly, rather than accept this

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<sup>197</sup> The difference between the £180 reported in Nepean's correspondence, and the £80 reported in *The Royal Kalendar*, cannot be explained at present. Nepean most likely got involved when one of the physicians that Ernst contacted about his tell-all book forwarded the letter to both prime minister William Pitt, and Henry Dundas, the Home Secretary.

<sup>198</sup> Evan Nepean[?] to Col. P.W. Goldsworthy, October 29, 1792, NAS, GD 51/1/14/13.

<sup>199</sup> Henry Dundas to Evan Nepean[?], November 3, 1792, NAS, GD 51/1/14/22.

<sup>200</sup> Col. P.W. Goldsworthy to Evan Nepean, October 30, 1792, NAS, GD 51/1/14/14.

generous settlement even after he had shown his true colors, the former page continued to push forward with his threat of publishing a full account of what had happened in the privacy of Kew during the illness of 1788 to 1789. The impertinence of the courtier reached a new height as he contacted the physicians, apothecaries, and surgeons who had attended George III while he was indisposed. Ernst informed them of his plans to publish and encouraged them to “refresh” their memories on the subject. To the physicians, he closed his letter with an ominous paragraph:

Sir, the Public who indignantly saw themselves called upon to pay for the Physicians that attended His Majesty during His Illness, will think themselves most justly entitled to some account of the Conduct of those Physicians during that dark & mysterious event.<sup>201</sup>

Unlike Ernst, the doctors, even though they had failed to put service to their sovereign above political rancor in 1788 and 1789, now abided by their oaths to keep the activities of the bedchamber quiet. They passed along Ernst’s threats to William Pitt, Lord Grenville, Henry Dundas, and other high-ranking politicians. In a letter from Dr. J.R. Reynolds to Henry Dundas, one gains an appreciation for the decorum which these men now exhibited. After stating that the physicians were not frightened by the threats Ernst made against them, Reynolds continued by writing to Dundas:

but what effect an exposition of the interior of the King’s family by a disappointed man, and a revival of circumstances which all good subjects wish to forget, may have upon the peace and comfort of their Majesties and the Royal Family, and what use persons ill-disposed to the public tranquility may make of it, are considerations which you, Sir, are more able to judge of than I am.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> George Ernst to Sir George Baker, November 1, 1792, NAS, GD 51/1/14/18.

<sup>202</sup> Dr. J.R. Reynolds to Henry Dundas, November 2, 1792, NAS, GD 51/1/14/20.

At least one of the medical men, the surgeon David Dundas, wrote back to Ernst.

Although he did not leave behind a diary of his attendance on the king, a passage from his letter helps provide insight into how Dundas felt while he was tending to his ailing sovereign back in 1788 and 1789. He wrote to Ernst that

.... a thousand arguments present themselves to me why you should refrain from such an undertaking [writing the tell-all book] – they must already have occurred to yourself – I will therefore not animadvert on the effect which, bringing back the painful [sic] remembrance of such unpleasant scenes to the King, who I know you loved & respected, would have on the public mind, neither will I notice the impropriety of exposing to public curiosity what I am sure you would rather a veil was for ever drawn over.<sup>203</sup>

Such sage advice did not mollify Ernst. He would continue his campaign, with the ever-present threat of publication dangling like the Sword of Damocles, for another eight years.

In the end, Ernst died in 1801, never having received the extra money he felt was rightfully his. Before his death, he continued his fight to gain his mother and sister placement at court. In 1795 he began directing his pleas to the Prince of Wales.<sup>204</sup> As late as 1800, he continued to send in petitions, although by this point his mother had died, asking for a onetime payment of £5000 and a £300 pension per annum for himself.<sup>205</sup>

Although hardly the most reliable source, John Heneage Jesse notes that in 1801 two

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<sup>203</sup> David Dundas to George Ernst, November 2, 1792, NAS, GD 51/1/14/27.

<sup>204</sup> George Ernst to Charles de Guiffardiere, February 11, 1795, NAS, GD 51/1/14/37; Charles de Guiffardiere to George Ernst, February 13, 1795, NAS, GD 51/1/14/38; George Ernst to Charles de Guiffardiere, February 18, 1795, NAS, GD 51/1/14/39; George, Prince of Wales to George Ernst, February 18, 1795, NAS, GD 51/1/14/40. It is possible that his connection with the Prince of Wales existed from when Ernst was, purportedly, supplying information on George III's health to Carlton House during the crisis of 1788-9.

<sup>205</sup> Evan Nepean to Henry Dundas, April 11, 1800, NAS, GD 51/1/14/41.



royal warrants were granted to a Dorothy Ernst, widow, for £150 per year and £50 per year to Charlotte Ernst, spinster.<sup>206</sup> It is possible that these were the wife and daughter of George Ernst and the reward for him never having carried through his threat of publishing his scandalous account of what the household servants had done to the king and what the king had done to his pages in 1788 to 1789. Despite traditional courtier oaths and new views of medical ethics, many of those closest to George III during his illness spread reports far and wide, helping to fuel the flames of the public's curiosity and demands to know what was really going on in the privacy of the king's rooms. Therefore, these relatively anonymous household servants were squarely at the center of the demystification of the English monarchy during the long eighteenth century.

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<sup>206</sup> J. Heneage Jesse, *Memoirs of The Life and Reign of King George the Third*, 2nd ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1867), 3:88-9.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

A monumental change occurred in the way that English subjects viewed their monarchs during the long eighteenth century. Ideas about sacred and divine monarchy survived the arrival of William III and Mary II during the Revolution of 1688. Examining the reportage of royal bodies in the expanding print culture of the later Stuarts and early Hanoverians highlights the moments when demystification chipped away at the elevated position of the monarch. Despite their sickly natures, both King William III and Queen Anne maintained enough popularity and propaganda to buttress the old beliefs of sacred and mystical kingship. This was, in part, possible because reportage of royal health was still illicit in most situations and the public never learned the full extent of their sovereigns' ailments.

Things changed during George I's and George II's reigns. Rather than relying on traditional ideals that dovetailed with the ancient mysteries of English monarchy, the German-born kings shifted their focus to Enlightenment principles in medicine and science. This new dynasty also had to contend with an expanding newspaper industry that catered to a popular interest in all aspects of the monarchy. This increased press coverage, coupled with internal political disputes between the king and the Prince of Wales, resulted in medical accounts of the royal family's health appearing in the press on an unprecedented level. In response to the more detailed coverage of monarchical health,

members of the royal family tried to get ahead of the story by spreading their own news about royal health. The combination of reports, from both the court and the media, especially after the distancing of the Hanoverian monarchs from the sacred ideals of earlier reigns, sped the process of demystification.

Once George III ascended the throne in 1760, developments in popular political participation and the further expansion of print culture created a perfect storm for demystification to reach its apex during the long eighteenth century. The decrease in the monarch's active political power, his appeal to a wide segment of the population, and his approach to domestic kingship in an age of celebrity, contributed to the outcome of the Regency Crisis in 1788 to 1789. When illness incapacitated the king, descriptions of the sovereign's actions and ailments littered the pages of print culture, as similar rumors flooded the streets and coffee houses. Such exposure gained further assistance when Parliament examined George III's physicians and published their testimonies, partially answering the never-before-seen demands circulating in the newspapers that the people had a right to know about the king's private health complaints. This culmination of events completed the process of demystifying the English monarchy.

The humanized George III, whose bodily complaints generated sympathy and compassion, survived the challenges of the French Revolution. His future bouts of illness in 1801, 1804, and 1810 added nothing more to the process of demystification. Even the actions of his heir, the future George IV, did not further diminish the mystery surrounding the monarchy. When the Prince of Wales feuded with his wife, Caroline of Brunswick, and testimony from the 1806 Delicate Investigation, which determined she

was not guilty of adultery, leaked to the press, no one was surprised at the actions of the prince or his wife.<sup>1</sup> Celebrity culture had expanded to a new level nearly fifty years earlier and the prince had already been involved in numerous scandals.

The leaks surrounding the Delicate Investigation in 1806 were just the latest in a series in which household servants were involved in spreading confidential information. Despite the oath courtiers swore to protect the royal family and prevent harmful rumors from spreading, some servants struggled. This was a constant theme throughout the long eighteenth century. Some individuals were guilty of only minor breaches of faith, such as Mrs. Worthington, the laundress at Kensington Palace, who shared an account of Queen Mary II's health in 1694. The more grievous breaches involved those servants with the most intimate access to the monarch during the days of the sickly Stuarts and the ailing George III – physicians and medical attendants. Party politics motivated some of the doctors, such as Sir John Shadwell and Sir David Hamilton under Queen Anne, and Dr. Richard Warren and George Ernst under George III, to share their sovereign's confidential information with the monarch's enemies. Other individuals, including John Arbuthnot and the Reverend Francis Willis, through their belief in personal loyalty, worked to conceal and disguise their ruler's ailments. The role of these household servants has been diminished by too few studies appreciating the interconnectedness of the history of medicine, the history of the court, and the expansion of the public sphere.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this event, see Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 177-207.

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